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COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Spring 2019 • Issue #182



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Inheriting a Salmon Stream
Creating a Community Land Trust
Growing Together through Trauma
Cross-Class Cooperation and Land Access



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ONLINE ONLY

Seeking Brigadoon: A Community of Dance-Campers Finds a Permanent Homeplace

Paul Freundlich

After 40 years of summer camps and other gatherings with shifting locations, Dance New England finally lands on its own 417 acres.

(Article available at www.ic.org/seekingbrigadoon.)



ON THE COVER

Participants in Soul Fire Farm's BIPOC Farmers Immersion learn about agriculture and community through a hands-on, culturally relevant, and celebratory experience. Photo courtesy of Soul Fire Farm (www.soulfirefarm.org).

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

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LETTERS



Communities in the 22nd Century

Thanks for the recent info. on Intentional Communities. I shall definitely buy some of the publications you are promoting.

I wonder if you have devoted an issue or part to the future. What will future communities be like after the year 2100?

I do not know if you have noticed that nobody is looking ahead beyond the end of this century—81 years' time. No level of government including the United Nations dare look that far partly because we can not and dare not contemplate what life might be like if we continue the way

we are going: missing greenhouse gas targets, not making the changes we need to our consciousness and reality. If we keep missing the IPCC goals what might the world look like in 2100 and 2200? What sort of communities will we need for our children? Will they be at the centre of the apocalypse and if so how do they best survive it? What do we need to get in place now? How have other communities handled similar situations in the past, such as Indigenous Communities facing settlers' guns and smallpox, etc.?

What shift in consciousness do we need now? There are many examples all around us of what is needed. But it is likely that we will turn to them only when it is too late. As the California and BC forests burn, as the Caravans make their ways towards countries and communities that do not want them, we are seeing just the start of the new phenomenon.

What could be the answer? Intentional Communities.

I have spent the last 10 years amongst First Nation communities who have lived here (North American continent) for the last 14,000 years. Like the Pope (*Laudato Si—Our Shared Home*) and such people as Noam Chomsky, I believe they have the key.

Your publication is needed now more than ever.

Best wishes,

Andrew Moore

Sooke, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada

Appreciating Diversity in Culture Issue, and Desiring More

I was glad to see some diversity of viewpoints and cultures (monastic, “unintentional” community, corporate setting) represented in the last issue, and would love to see much more. I cannot speak for all groups, but one that I identify as needing more representation is the kinesthetically oriented (body-sense-oriented). Our (dominant culture's) public educational system has only recently begun to recognize different learning styles, and differences in ways of perceiving and communicating do not stop at childhood. Those who understand with the body first often can struggle to make themselves heard in word-dominated conversation, even though they have vast intel-

ligence and a great deal to offer community.

There may be overlap with other groups that have been historically underrepresented in the intentional communities conversation, and that the magazine is seeking to be more inclusive of.

Addressing the subjects of body language and “body self-talk,” in relationship and activity, would also be of great benefit to the communities movement, and I hope this will happen in an issue soon.

In community,

Joshua Myrvaagnes
Somerville, Massachusetts

Reflections on Culture

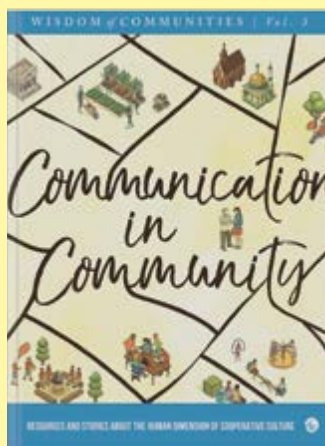
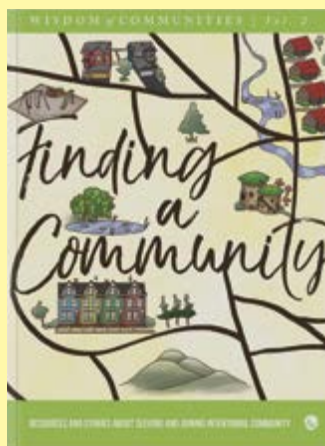
We’ve just received COMMUNITIES #181 and I’d like to congratulate you and the team on a really outstanding issue. It will be added to our collection in the Research Library at Yad Tabenkin Institute where it serves as an important reference for researchers and the general public.

Each and every article is so interesting as it reflects on the Culture of Intentional Communities.

We’re putting together the spring ICSA (International Communal Studies Association) newsletter, ICSA Bulletin #64, and request permission to include the article “An Evolution in Community.” It’s very comprehensive and gives a lot of past and current information about Lost Valley Educational Center, including schedule changes and the growing diversity in employment. I’m not a kibbutz member but know that many of them have gone through a similar process of change over the past years. I feel sure it will be of interest to many readers.

COMMUNITIES is THE go-to publication for anyone interested in the subject and I hope that you’ll prosper and reach out to even more people in 2019. Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and peaceful new year.

Ruth Sobol
International Communal
Studies Association
Yad Tabenkin, The Research and
Documentation Institute of the
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Ramat Efal, Israel



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Volume 1, *Starting a Community: Resources and Stories about Creating and Exploring Intentional Community* includes both general articles and on-the-ground stories from intentional community founders and other catalysts of cooperative efforts.

Volume 2, *Finding a Community: Resources and Stories about Seeking and Joining Intentional Community* shares authors’ experiences, tools, advice, and perspectives relevant to anyone searching for an intentional community to visit or to live in.

Volume 3, *Communication in Community: Resources and Stories about the Human Dimension of Cooperative Culture* includes articles about decision-making, governance, power, gender, class, race, relationships, intimacy, politics, and neighbor relations in cooperative group culture.

Volume 4, *Sustainability in Community: Resources and Stories about Creating Eco-Resilience in Intentional Community* focuses on food, water, permaculture, shelter, energy, ecological footprint, ecovillage design, eco-education, and resilience in cooperative culture.

Volumes 1 and 2 meet the need for one-stop collections of stories to help founders and seekers. Volumes 3 and 4 are primers on the variety of “soft” and “hard” skills and approaches that allow intentional communities and their members to endure, evolve, and thrive.

These books should broaden anyone’s outlook on what is possible, how to pursue their dreams of community, and how to make their own lives and their communities models for a more cooperative, resilient culture—one that draws from the past while working toward a better future.

To order, please visit
ic.org/wisdom

COMMUNITIES Editorial Policy

COMMUNITIES is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living or shared projects.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live and work cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living purposefully with others. We seek contributions that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what's difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues. We also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts—in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests—and about “creating community where you are.”

We do not intend to promote one kind of group over another, and take no official position on a community's economic structure, political agenda, spiritual beliefs, environmental issues, or decision-making style. As long as submitted articles are related thematically to community living and/or cooperation, we will consider them for publication. However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community interfere with its members' right to leave.

Our aim is to be as balanced in our reporting as possible, and whenever we print an article critical of a particular community, we invite that community to respond with its own perspective.

Submissions Policy

To submit an article, please first request Writers' Guidelines: COMMUNITIES, 1 Dancing Rabbit Ln, Box 23, Rutledge MO 63563-9720; 800-462-8240; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at ic.org/communities-magazine.

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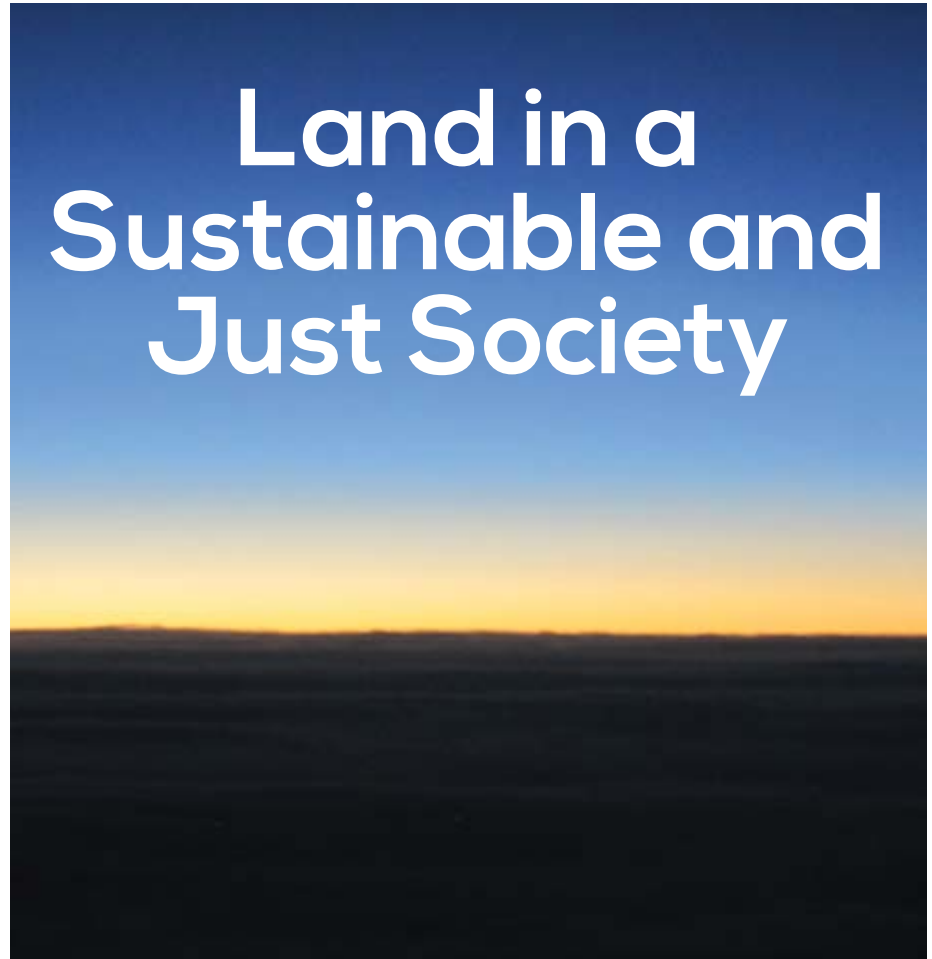
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Please check ic.org/communities-magazine or email ads@ic.org for advertising information.

What is an “Intentional Community”?

An “intentional community” is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based; others are both. For all their variety, though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others.



Chris Roth

“How many people, whose doors I’ve knocked on, got kicked out of their homes, with their children, without a job, and I was the partial cause of it... So, that’s how this spark of the need for land came to me. Seeing the land, just the land itself. The beauty of the land, the purity of the land, and the acknowledgment that all power come from the land, and the land come from God. All power comes from the land.”

That’s Reverend Charles Sherrod, speaking about the founding of New Communities, Inc. in the documentary *Arc Of Justice: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of a Beloved Community* (www.arcofjusticefilm.com).

New Communities, founded in 1969 by black farmers in southwest Georgia, was one of the first land trusts in the United States. The founders of New Communities came out of the Civil Rights Movement (among them was Slater King, a cousin of Martin Luther King Jr.) because they recognized that, in the words of one of those interviewed in the film, “economic opportunity was...connected to civil rights, and that economic opportunity meant the opportunity for independence.” Charles Sherrod and others had traveled to Israel in 1968 to “learn about developing homes and cooperatives on community-owned land.” They brought back the idea of owning your own home but leasing the land underneath it, creating the basis for a cooperative economy.

During its existence through the ’70s and into the ’80s, New Communities was attacked physically, economically, and financially, finally forced to close in 1983 from discriminatory practices by the USDA. In 2009 landholders from New Communities received \$12.8 million as part of a class action lawsuit against the USDA. New Communities is a powerful story that helps us understand more fully what intentional

communities are, what they can be, and why they matter.

Well-meaning white people will sometimes ask, why aren't there more people of color living in intentional communities? A common explanation is, well, they find community in other ways. While this may be true on some level, it doesn't acknowledge the numerous examples of opposition or outright violence that people of color or interracial groups trying to organize intentional communities have faced. It's not that they haven't tried to create intentional communities, it's that they've met barriers that communities started by white people don't face. Land is indeed power, and some people don't want other people to have it. But the desire to have land, to have the security and the access to self-sufficiency that land can provide, and a place where a community can come together on their own terms to collectively determine the conditions of their lives, this is a desire shared by all kinds of people.

When you stop and think about it, the idea of private property is pretty weird. If I "own" land then I get to do whatever I want with it, and I get to say whether or not anyone else can come onto this land or what they can and can't do on it? Yes, as long as someone doesn't take it from me. There is also likely a State or other authority willing to protect my "right" to that land, by force if necessary, but who can also take away that right if I don't pay taxes, if I start doing something illegal, or am part of a demographic that's being systematically disenfranchised and discriminated against. It's all pretty arbitrary and based on whoever happens to have control.

It also pretends that land use doesn't have consequences. Depletion of natural resources resulting in migration and war goes back as far as recorded civilization. Exclusive, unilateral land use makes even less sense with 7.5 billion people on the planet, and a global economy consisting of consumption and waste practices that are compromising the ecosystems on which all life depends. We live in a world where we've exceeded the sustainable use of renewable resources, meaning that some people are getting their needs met (or very much more than what they need) at the expense of other people's ability to get their needs met. Self-sufficiency, the ability to access the resources needed to sustain yourself, has become a privilege, a luxury. How then do we reconcile our notions of private property with a sustainable and just society?

A key motivation for creating intentional communities is the desire to have control over the circumstances of your life—in other words, banding together with like-minded people on a piece of land where you get to do what you want. This in turn can be a result of a variety of motivations, from protectionism to social justice. Regardless, it's what you have to do within the economic and political systems covering pretty much every square foot of land on the face of the earth—systems that are fundamentally based on the objectification and commodification of land. Collectively deciding how **all** people can get their needs met through sustainable land use isn't even an available option for the world today. There are just too many vested interests in maintaining the current system based on an almost hallowed belief in private property.

Ultimately part of what intentional communities are trying to model, and what movements trying to bring back the Commons are aiming at, is this. We can have a different relationship with each other and a different relationship with the land that we all share and depend on for our existence, but it will take willingness from all of us to challenge fundamental assumptions and cultural norms we have about privacy and control. Are we able to share access and decision-making about the resources necessary to live in an equitable and sustainable way? Are we able to shift our approach towards land use away from control towards access and stewardship? Are we able to see ourselves in relationship to an earth that is very much alive? Are we able to honor the relationship to the land that all people and all life share, considering and valuing equally the needs of all life as inherently interdependent?

I believe we can and that intentional communities can help show us the path forward. 🐦

Sky Blue is Executive Director of the Fellowship for Intentional Community.



Diana Leafe Christian Consultations & Workshops

"The most rewarding workshop I've ever experienced."

—Mark Lakeman, City Repair, Portland, OR

"Your workshop was fantastic! You are a master at taking complex Sociocracy material and making it simple."

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"You're a sparking trainer and a joy to work with. LA Eco-Village was energized for a year following your workshop."

—Lois Arkin, Los Angeles Eco-Village

"I was riveted! You hit the fundamental, untold truths about cohousing and decision-making."

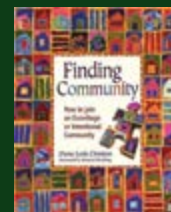
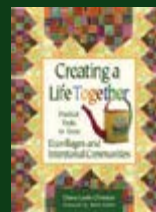
—Mark Westcombe, Forge Bank Cohousing, Lancaster, UK

"Quite simply the finest workshop I've ever attended. You quickly cut to the chase, providing hours of practical answers about Sociocracy."

—Denis Gay, Champlain Valley Cohousing, VT

"I don't think I ever learned so much in such a short time."

—Susanna Michaelis, Pacific Gardens Cohousing, British Columbia



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Chris Roth

Connecting Land and Community

This issue focuses on a key area of intentional community: the relationship of groups to the land on which they live and make their homes. While this is particularly important for rural communities, the question of who owns (or purports to own), controls, and/or stewards the ground under our feet affects every intentional community, even the most urban one. That being said, the articles in this issue focus mostly on more consciously land-based communities—as opposed to those occupying, for example, yard-less urban developments or apartment buildings.

In many ways, Land and Community cannot be separated. Access to land depends on interactions and negotiations with other human beings; effective organizing to gain access to land depends on “community” in one form or another. This social dimension to land access is a double-edged sword: most of us reading this magazine are living on land that was long ago stolen from its indigenous inhabitants via very effective organized efforts (facilitated by, as Jared Diamond has pointed out, the capacity of cultures with “guns, germs, and steel” to overwhelm cultures without them). This same social/economic/political dimension to land access proves an obstacle to any less-privileged or marginalized group which wants to gain or regain access to land.

Yet this equation can be reversed, and land can also become accessible through our own collective, organized efforts. Most of the articles in this issue are dedicated to showing how—as well as to exploring the complex issues surrounding land, people, privilege, and how to achieve greater equity and sustainability in our relationship to land.

And just as access to land depends on community in some form, community often depends on and derives its vitality from a group’s relationship to land. This is the other major thread running through this issue, whose overarching theme might be the interdependence of our selves, our human communities, and the lands which steward (and hopefully are stewarded by) our presence.

• • •

Readers will notice a few changes in this issue. We’ve slightly increased font sizes, leading, and margins, as well as attention to graphic relief on article pages. It is still a packed issue—we hope just as full of valuable material while also being more accessible and attractive. We’ve sacrificed the equivalent of an article or two by making these layout adjustments, but we’re happy with the trade-off. To put things in perspective, every issue of COMMUNITIES would fill a standard-dimension book exceeding 200 pages (including illustrations) if laid out in a typical book format. We always welcome your feedback on these layout changes or any other aspect of the magazine.

Our next issue will announce some other exciting changes within the larger FIC organization. Please stay tuned!

• • •

Finally, we want to thank all of who supported (through the crowdfunding campaign that launched it a year ago), purchased, and helped spread the word about our four-volume *Wisdom of Communities* book set. Those who have early copies of Volume 4 now own a collector’s item—we discovered recently that, due to an optical illusion, “Sustainability” on the front cover is spelled without the final “i.” That mistake has now been corrected. The lesson? Perhaps that proper “Sustainability” is even more elusive than we’ve come to think—that even what appears to be sustainability may not be. True sustainability may require a third I/eye. We’re sure more lessons can be derived from this episode, but meanwhile, we believe that many more lessons can be derived from the books themselves—still available for order at ic.org/wisdom.

• • •

This issue, like the four that preceded it, is available as a free or by-donation digital download at our website (go to ic.org/182). Please tell others about this magazine and help us continue to serve the communities movement and the wider movement toward a more cooperative, just, and resilient world.

Community, land, and self need to be integrated once again in ways that can be continued for generations. We all can be part of that transition. 🌱

Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES and calls Lost Valley/Meadowsong Ecovillage in western Oregon home.

We want to say **THANK YOU!** to our **Community Members**



We deeply appreciate your support. Contributions from our members are essential to providing programs and services. But even more than that, without you there wouldn't be a movement! You are the reason the world should be paying attention to this movement.



For more information on FIC Membership visit www.ic.org/membership

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Bellbunya Community Association, Belli Park, Queensland, Australia
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Common Place Land Cooperative, Truxton, New York
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Earthen Heart LLC, Bangor, Michigan
EcoReality Co-op, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada
Ecovillage at SEED, an International Community for Sustainable Living, Limón Province, Costa Rica

Elderberry Village, Rougemont, North Carolina
Emberi, Conneaut, Ohio
Emerald Earth Sanctuary, Boonville, California
Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village, Cincinnati, Ohio
EVO: The Emerald Village, Vista, California
Fern Hollow Ecovillage, Copper Hill, Virginia
Fortunity, Asheville, North Carolina
Ganas, Staten Island, New York
GlowHouse, Washington, District of Columbia
Goodenough Community, Greater Seattle Area, Washington
Great Oak Cohousing, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Green Grove Cohousing Community, Forest Grove, Oregon
Greenmount Eco-co-housing, Greenmount, Western Australia, Australia
Harbourside Cohousing, Sooke, British Columbia, Canada
Harper Valley Farm, Harrison, Arkansas
Headwaters Garden Camp; Learning Center, Cabot, Vermont
Heathcote Community, Freeland, Maryland
High Cove, Bakersville, North Carolina
Hygieia Homestead, Sterling, Michigan
Johnson's Landing Retreat Center, Kaslo, British Columbia, Canada
Kalikalos, Pelion, Magnesia, Greece
Kingfisher Cohousing on Brookdale, Oakland, California
Komaja, Gersau, Switzerland
La Cité Écologique de Ham-Nord, Ham-Nord, Quebec, Canada
las Indias, Madrid, Madrid, Spain
Living Miracles Worldwide, Kamas, Utah
Los Portales, Castilblanco de los Arroyos, Sevilla, Spain
Lost Valley Education and Event Center/Meadowsong Ecovillage, Dexter, Oregon
Lotus Lodge, Candler, North Carolina
Magic, Palo Alto, California
Monan's Riill, Santa Rosa, California
Monterey Cohousing, St. Louis Park, Minnesota
Morningland Monastery, Long Beach, California
Morninglory, Killaloe, Ontario, Canada
Neruda, Marshfield, Vermont
New Vrindaban, Moundsville, West Virginia
Noosa Forest Retreat Holistic Permaculture Community, Kin Kin, Queensland, Australia
Oakcreek Community, Stillwater, Oklahoma
Oakwood Center, Selma, Indiana
Oasis Gardens, Roosevelt, Utah
Oblate Community of St Paul IOCU, Clayton, Washington
Open Circle, Etlan, Virginia
Planet Repair Institute, Portland, Oregon

Pleasant Glade, Tonasket, Washington
Port Townsend EcoVillage, Port Townsend, Washington
Putney Commons, Putney, Vermont
Quaker Intentional Village Canaan, East Chatham, New York
Rancho La Salud Village, Ajijic, Mexico
Raw-Wisdom Vegan Community, Oneonta, New York
Red Earth Farms, Rutledge, Missouri
River City Housing Collective, Iowa City, Iowa
Rock Garden Springs, Big Bend, California
Rocky Corner Cohousing, New Haven, Connecticut
RoseWind Cohousing, Port Townsend, Washington
Russian House #1, Jenner, California
Saint Cecilia Catholic Community, Palm Springs, California
Shannon Farm Community, Afton, Virginia
Smart Progressives, Oxnard, California
Songaia Cohousing Community, Bothell, Washington
Southwest Sufi Community, Silver City, New Mexico
Springtree Community, Scottsville, Virginia
Sticks and Stones, Golden Lake, Ontario, Canada
Struggle Mountain, Los Altos Hills, California
Sunburst Community, Lompoc, California
Sunflower Cohousing, Vieux-Ruffec, Poitou-Charentes, France
Tamarack Knoll Community, Fairbanks, Alaska
Teaching Drum Outdoor School, Three Lakes, Wisconsin
Temple Homestead, Decatur, Tennessee
The Barley Jar Urban Ecovillage and Spiritual Community, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
The Camphill School, Glenmoore, Pennsylvania
The Coastal Village, Whistler, B.C., Canada
The Village at Ananda Laurelwood, Gaston, Oregon
Tres Placitas del Rio, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Twin Oaks Community, Louisa, Virginia
Twin Pines Country Plantation and Guest Ranch, Norwood, Georgia
Universal Alliance of Communities, Inc. The Transition House, Walsenburg, Colorado
Upper Langley, Langley, Washington
Valley of Light, Independence, Virginia
Valverde Commons, Taos, New Mexico
Village Hearth Cohousing, Durham, North Carolina
Walnut Street Co-op, Eugene, Oregon
Whole Village Ecovillage, Caledon, Ontario, Canada
Wind Spirit Community, Winkelman, Arizona
Winslow Cohousing Group, Bainbridge Island, Washington
Wiscoy Valley Community Land Cooperative, Winona, Minnesota

THANK YOU!

Black Land Matters

An Interview with Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm

By Sky Blue; transcribed/edited by Dana Belanger and Chris Roth

*In November 2018 FIC Executive Director Sky Blue interviewed Leah Penniman, co-founder of Soul Fire Farm (www.soulfirefarm.org). Started as a small family farm in Grafton, New York, Soul Fire has become a community farm run by a nonprofit, people-of-color-led organization (Soul Fire Farm Institute, Inc.) that works to dismantle racism in the food system by increasing farmland stewardship by people of color, promoting equity in food access, and training the next generation of activist farmers. Leah is the author of *Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land*, published in October 2018 by Chelsea Green, and is also a member of the resident community on Soul Fire's 72 acres. Following is an edited transcript of that wide-ranging conversation, which is also available in its entirety as an audio file at ic.org/soulfirefarminterview.*

Sky: At Soul Fire Farm, who owns the land and how is it governed?

Leah: The land is actually in ownership transition, from our family to collective ownership. We are forming a co-op to own the land, with the help of a pro bono legal clinic at Pace University. We've been working on this for a couple of years, just trying to make what we call "White Man's Law" bend to our needs to share the land cooperatively. But the members of that co-op are different from Soul Fire Farm.

Soul Fire Farm is a nonprofit organization that's dedicated to ending racism and injustice in the food system. We have a staff, programs, and outcomes. That nonprofit will be one of the voting member-owners of the co-op along with other residents of the land who are not necessarily a part of Soul Fire Farm. The founding members of the co-op include the nonprofit, with one vote for its board and one vote for its staff who live on the land—myself, my partner Jonah, our two children, my sister Naima, and then Taina and her family who have a yurt on the land—with six more member-owner shares open and essentially for sale.

As Soul Fire Farm, we're working very hard to return land and resources to the descendants of those from whom it was stolen. Probably the most exciting thing that we're working on right now, in relation to communities and shared land, is the Northeast Farmers of Color Community Land Trust. This is a collaboration between over a dozen northeastern Indigenous tribal communities, northeast Indigenous bands, and Black and Latinx and Asian and Indigenous farmers in the northeast who all are struggling with being either dispossessed from land, or reduced to a very small part of their ancestral territories. They are in the process of forming a two-tiered land trust: a 501(c)(3) that has the ability to operate both in the sphere of conservation easements and cultural heritage easements, as well as the community land trust sphere of affordable housing. We'll also have subsidiary 501(c)(2)s that operate on the local level for all of the different land holdings of that land trust.

Right now we're hosting skill shares to educate community members about how land trusts work. We're super excited about this process because it's bringing together communities that have historically struggled for good reason around trust and collaboration. We really believe that to talk about land sovereignty without centering the voices and power of the Indigenous communities makes absolutely no sense and is disingenuous.

Sky: Can you tell me a little bit of the story of how Soul Fire Farm came to be?

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Jameil Mosely



Photos courtesy of Soul Fire Farm

Leah: Sure! There are many birth points for everything, but the land sort of chose Jonah and me and our family in 2006. We started out with a vision around increasing food access to communities living under food apartheid because we had been living for several years in the south end of Albany where it is a real struggle to get food. It is a low-income, low-wealth community with no grocery stores or public transportation, and so our neighbors were encouraging us to create the farm for the people. So Soul Fire Farm was born with a somewhat narrow but important goal: getting food for the people.

We purchased affordable, marginal land that had no human development on it: no road, no septic, no electric, no houses...and no soil really—about seven inches of topsoil over hard pan clay. So we spent from 2006 to 2010, just friends and

family, building up. We built our house and education center—strawbale, timber frame, passive-solar, all natural—and we started doing soil repair. Then we opened the farm in 2011 with just a very small CSA, 20 families. We were doing that on the weekends and the evenings around both of us having full-time jobs. Jonah was running a building business, and I was doing public school teaching. We'd deliver eggs and veggies and meat and stuff into the community on Sundays.

Over time that's really grown into what is now a community farm, run by Soul Fire Farm Institute, Inc., a nonprofit organization. Depending on the time of year, there are between four and nine of us on staff, and we certainly have kept the core of what Soul Fire Farm is, which is to grow food using sustainable, regenerative, Afro-Indigenous methods that restore the land

and provide that food to communities under food apartheid. We use the sliding scale model, we use doorstep delivery, and we now feed 100 families with this food every week during the growing season.

In addition to that we provide a number of training programs for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian farmers who we call the returning generation of farmers: peoples whose grandparents, great grandparents were kicked off the land, forced off the land, who are now wanting to reconnect to the earth, So we do farmer training, builder training, wilderness survival—all of these skills that help folks make a life on land. We've had over 500 graduates from our intensive, week-long, more advanced program, and most of those folks are doing incredible things as far as being growers and being food system activists.

The third and final thing that we work

We work to help return land and resources and power to the descendants of those from whom it was stolen.



on is reparations work: working on policies and practices regionally and nationally that address the return of land and resources and power to the descendants of those from whom it was stolen. That's where the land trust comes in. We also work nationally with the HEAL Food Alliance, a national Black food and justice alliance, on their reparations and policy work and so on.

So that's the overview of Soul Fire: it started as a small family thing and now it's a community farm.

Sky: When you started off were you planning on or anticipating going in all of these different, bigger-scale directions, or was it just like, we need to feed people, or was it both?

Leah: We always intended to have more folks live on the land with us. We didn't know what model that would take. We'd been part of a few stop-and-start rural intentional community projects, focusing on it together. They had the idea, and then when it came down to folks laying down the money, it kind of fizzled out. So we had that intention but we also decided, we're not going to wait anymore.

We're just going to do this and see how it emerges.

Something that's been so powerful about it is that we could never have anticipated it being in exactly the form that it is—because every step we took was in response to the community's needs and demands. Our youth program came out of parents who were getting our food share saying, "Our young people are being criminalized and rounded up in the summer, they don't have anything to do—can we send them out to the farm and you'll teach them some skills?" Our training program for adult farmers came out of people calling us up from different places in the country saying, "There are not Black-led farms where we can learn, and we're experiencing discrimination in our apprenticeships—can you start something for us?" And so on. The land work came out of alumni saying, "Now we know how to farm, but we don't have land." And what's been exciting about that is we haven't ever felt like we've had to force our will on community and say, "Soul Fire is this and you all need to get with it." It's always been really molding and adapting

and changing into what people need.

So it's yes and no. Yes we knew we wanted to expand the vision of how we would serve community, but we didn't have a 10-year plan that we developed in isolation.

Sky: You've planted a seed that has grown into this amazing thing. Where did the motivation to plant that initial seed come from for you?

Leah: I started farming when I was 16 years old with the Food Project in Lincoln and Boston, Massachusetts. That was a real homecoming for me because I had a lot of identity struggles, I had experience in my family of poverty and addiction, all of these early childhood traumas, and I was looking for meaning. Farming became that—an opportunity to demonstrate both my love of the earth, my passion for environmental stewardship, as well as social justice—and I never looked back. So there was that spark there of wanting to create a farm and having experience farming. In the years after the Food Project I worked at several northeast rural farms and it was a predominantly white, predominantly apolitical situation, so I had a little bit of crisis of faith in wondering

if this was the right path—if I was being a race traitor, if I should get into housing advocacy or education or gun violence issues or some of the issues that seem more near and dear to the Black community.

There was a really beautiful moment at one of the NOFA (Northeast Organic Farming Association) Conferences, when I was an older teen. I'd gone around and given these little slips of paper out to anyone who appeared Black, Latinx, Indigenous, saying let's meet under this tree at 1 pm and talk about what it's like being POC in this movement. Maybe a dozen people came and Karen Washington was one of them, who is one of the cofounders of Rise and Root Farm, also the founder of the Black Urban Growers and the Black Farmers Conference. All of this came later, but at the time she said, you know what, don't give up, we belong here in this movement, and one day we're gonna have our own conference, and just hang in there, you'll see. And she's become an important mentor and friend for me over the years, but that was a moment of really deciding, just like my grandfather had done being one of

the first Black engineers at NASA: *there doesn't seem to be a space for people of color here, but we're gonna make a space. We're gonna be the trailblazers and allow space for others.* That motivation was the *seed of the seed* for Soul Fire Farm.

Sky: Maybe say a little more about why you think food and farming and access to land is so important for marginalized people.

Leah: Oh my goodness it's essential. The whole food system is built on a racist DNA. The original sin of this nation is the genocide and displacement of millions of Indigenous First Nations people, and then it was followed by the stolen labor which built the wealth of this country, which was predominantly African labor at first, and then through the Bracero Program and H-2A (temporary foreign agricultural workers) became the labor of folks born outside the United States, especially from Mexico and the Caribbean. And today, depending on what census you look at, between 95 and 98 percent of the rural land is controlled by white folks. That is more than it was in 1910, more concentration of control in the hands of one

racial group—which is really, really dangerous, because you know, as Malcolm X talks about, land is the basis of all power, all dignity, all freedom, and land doesn't just give us the opportunities to provide for our material sustenance and have businesses, it also gives us the capacity for autonomy and resistance.

Fannie Lou Hamer talks a lot about this. She was the founder of the Freedom Farm Co-op in Sunflower County and she had 70 families living there and she said if you have 400 quarts of greens and gumbo soup canned for the winter, no one can push you around and tell you what to do. So if you're, in contrast, really depending on the empire, depending on a system that hates you, for all of your basic sustenance, you're not going to be able to really resist that system because you're intertwined with its success.

In the Civil Rights Movement the Black farmers were the backbone. They were the ones who provided the meeting space, the bail money, they provided lodging and food and protection for all of the activists who came down for Freedom Summer and for the other voter registration cam-



paigns because obviously no white-run hotel or restaurant was going to support these rabble-rousers. We literally would not have a Civil Rights Movement, we would not have a Civil Rights Act, if it wasn't for land-owning independent Black farmers.

So we lose a lot of our capacity for resistance when we don't own our land, and then of course the obvious consequence is not having access to good food and all of the repercussions in terms of diet-related illness. Diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and ADHD are all related to lack of access to good food, which is in turn tied to our food sovereignty and our ability to produce sustenance within our own communities.

Sky: I've heard people talk about reparations as something that needs to happen outside of a capitalist context—that we can't think about reparations as cutting people checks and then saying, “OK, here you go, good luck surviving in the capitalist economy,” but that it needs to be more about returning to people their ability to sustain themselves. It sounds like that's along the lines of what you're talking about.

Leah: Yeah, I think reparations—how it's done, and when, and where—all that needs to be defined by the communities to whom those resources are owed. So I certainly wouldn't pretend to speak for all Black and Indigenous people and say our reparations needs to be x, y, z. I think it's

very important for us to be listening and heeding, and not trying to do thinking on behalf of other people.

Ed Whitfield—who is another mentor of mine, a brilliant cooperative developer and lifelong activist—gave a really great analogy for reparations when we were last together. He said, “Imagine that your neighbor stole your cow and then after a couple weeks they felt bad that they stole your cow so they came over and they apologized profusely—‘I know it was wrong, I'm sorry I took your cow, and I'm gonna make it up to you. Every week for the rest of the cow's life I'm going to bring you half a pound of butter at no cost.’ And of course you would be like, ‘Can I have my cow back?’”

And so reparations really is not about doling out some pittance of the wealth that our ancestors provided for this nation, but really giving back—if the cow in the story is the source of that wealth, that ability to have personal sustainability and community sustainability, you've gotta give back that whole cow.

Sky: It's been amazing to me to see over the past couple years how much more comfortable with the conversation about reparations a lot of white people are becoming, but it's still a touchy subject. I think for a lot of white people, part of where it gets touchy for them is that they feel like they're being screwed too. There's this sense of, “Well it doesn't feel fair to me either”—it starts to feel even more unfair to them to be giving things to other people when they're also being screwed. So I'm wondering if there's anything you can say that would help understanding of why this is important.

Leah: Sure. We all suffer under capitalism, so I think it's really dangerous to get into some sort of hierarchy of oppression conversation of who's more oppressed or who deserves more. But white supremacy is real—and it can't be summed up in a soundbite. I think that every white American certainly needs to read *The Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, needs to read *King Leopold's Ghost* to understand both the African and Indigenous oppressions and the three pillars of white supremacy.

Just to give one example, if you take on average the disparity in wealth between



Capers Rumph

white and Black people right now in this country, according to the Pew Research Center, it is at least 13:1. So the average white person has 13 times the wealth of the average Black person. When I was born 38 years ago, it was 8:1. It was 4:1 the generation before. So there is an increasing aggregation and accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few by race. And that's because 80 percent of wealth is inherited. The main way that people build intergenerational wealth is through property ownership, specifically the ownership of developed property—of houses.

And just one example of structural racism: in the 1930s the US government through the Housing Act commissioned these maps which have now become known as redlining maps. These maps essentially determined which neighborhoods were suitable for lending by banks and which neighborhoods were not suitable. And the ones that were not suitable were neighborhoods of people of color. They were outlined in red, and they did not get mortgages. So from the 1930s to present, even today for example in Detroit where my brother lives right now, people he works with who have two professional incomes in their household will not be able to get a mortgage within the city of Detroit because of this legacy of redlining. When folks came back after WWII with the GI Bill, only a handful of mortgages went to Black people—almost all went to white people. We've been denied since the '30s this source of building intergenerational wealth.

So when we talk about reparations we're not talking about a snapshot of the current moment. We're looking at history, we're looking at the 6.4 trillion dollars of stolen wealth from the labor of Black Americans who were working on plantations. And that wealth is still in the hands of white people; it's still in the Schwab Corporation, etc. So we're figuring out, *how do we address those wrongs?* You know, Germany's doing it, other places are doing it. How do we not imagine that there was no history and that suddenly, "Oh, how come Black folks are poor now?—it must be their fault." We really have to address an aggregate. And that's not to say there might not be one exception or a few exceptions where this white person really has



it rougher than all these people of color. We really need to look at the systemic level; how do we address these trends?

Sky: There's an interesting parallel of questioning around racial diversity in intentional communities. A lot of people in predominantly white communities will ask, "Why aren't there more people of color living in intentional communities?" One of the things that sometimes gets thrown out as a possible explanation is that "Oh, well people of color find their sense of community in other ways." But that doesn't acknowledge the fact that it's mostly white people who have set up these intentional communities so that they're not exactly very comfortable for people who don't look like them. And then it also ignores the systemic discrimination and in some cases outright violence against people of color who have tried or are trying to organize in these ways. It's not just an accident—"Oh, they just happen to find their community somewhere else." There are actual forces involved here.

Leah: That's a really good point. Folks might not know that the very first community land trust in the United States was started by Black families under the leadership of Charles and Shirley Sherrod, in 1969: New Communities in Albany, Georgia. They had 5,700 acres, they had 500 families involved in the planning phase, and they had remarkable success in many ways, but they experienced violence and terrorism, including by the governor of their own state. People were bombing



their offices, diluting their fertilizer, killing off their hogs. They ended up being some of the plaintiffs in the Pigford v. Glickman case, which was settled out of court as the largest civil rights settlement in US history, which was against the US government for discriminating against Black farmers and driving Black farmers off their land. I'm not being sensationalist—this was a lawsuit where fault was assigned to the US government.

And the same with Fannie Lou Hamer with the Freedom Farm and a number of other examples. The Nation of Islam has their farm and community, but I think your point is really good that if something is founded by white folks it's going to be infused with white culture with probably



Whoever tells you that Black and Brown folks don't want to go back to the land is misinformed.

tacit white supremacy. It's not going to be necessarily a safe space. We have to ask ourselves also what type of resource privilege is necessary to start communities in this day and age given all the barriers to entry—the legal hurdles that folks have to navigate as well as the purchase price of properties.

Mama Savi Horne of the Land Loss Prevention Project gave me this really beautiful insight at a recent conference where she was saying Black families and communities have lived cooperatively forever and we find ourselves in this legal system where it's complicated to do that. And one of the ways that families try to preserve this, ironically, is through heir property. So instead of leaving a will and leaving your land to a certain number of people there's this idea that if you don't leave a will, it goes to heir property which is the idea that it's just shared, somewhat vaguely in the legal context, by all of your

descendants forever. This has gotten Black families into a lot of trouble because with heir property in most states you can't take out a loan. You're ineligible for a lot of the USDA programs to support your farm. If you have one unscrupulous developer and they can convince one of your heirs to sell out they might be able to force sale at auction. So it's become a vehicle for Black land loss, ironically.

But Mama Savi reframed that and said it's not that Black folks who don't leave a will don't care about their land, it's just the way it's always been in our communities that your land just belongs to your whole family—that *is* the intentional community. But we don't really have a legal mechanism to support that as a default in this country. Our legal mechanisms support individualism as a default. So some legislation is being introduced in some states to try to switch that around—to make it harder for people to take advantage of heir property, and to give more support to families when their actual intention is, “We just want to share this with everyone.”

Which is a lot of what we talk about in intentional communities! How do we not have private ownership and *da da da da da*. So I think that the Black community is trying to do that. Certainly the Indigenous community is doing that with the way that reservations are held in common. And Indigenous communities are working with land trust models as well. So I would say white folks don't know what they're talking about. They're in their own silos.

Sky: Right. Circling back to Soul Fire Farm, what are some of the biggest challenges you've faced? And I'm thinking of both external systemic challenges you might have faced and also internal in terms of the healing and education with the people who've been a part of Soul Fire Farm—what they've had to confront. Or what the people doing programs have had to confront. What are some of the biggest challenges that you all have faced in this work in developing Soul Fire Farm?

Leah: Oh my god, so many challenges. Right now what's up for us is just capacity, because there's such a demand. Whoever tells you that Black and Brown folks don't want to go back to the land is misinformed because we have such a demand for every program that we do, for our mentorship, our resources. One of the reasons we wrote *Farming While Black* as a book is to try to not gatekeep a lot of this knowledge—to just get it out there. Everything we know is in the book in some form so you can DIY your next steps, whether that's about intentional community, or seed saving, creating youth programming, and all the rest.

So capacity is our biggest challenge but along the way resources have been a challenge for sure. The reason we got such marginal land is we didn't have any money or funding. We had to dig the foundation for our house with shovels and if anyone knows the mountainous clay bouldery soils of Grafton, that's a many-months feat and we're lucky that we were young and naive and stubborn—that we pushed through and did that. And now a lot of folks who are alumni are experiencing similar things. They have the skills, they have the passion, but they are struggling to afford property or to get additional training.

Obviously we believe that the government should be partly responsible for coordinating reparations but in the meantime we're doing our own grassroots version of that. Our alumni created a reparations map where folks with resources can go ahead and give directly to Black- and Brown-led land-based projects. We've had over a dozen folks get resources through that tool. We're just trying to use our ingenuity and creativity to garner the resources we need within community while we wait

for society to catch up.

Sky: Based on what I read on Soul Fire Farm's website, part of the importance you see of access to land and farming is the relationship people create with land—that there's a healing aspect to that in addition to everything else. You're not just working on "How do we manage this land, how do we grow food?" There is something deeper, a healing, personal, spiritual aspect to that work that's being brought in.

Leah: Yeah, definitely. Our folks have experienced centuries of oppression on land; I mentioned genocide and enslavement but there was also convict leasing and sharecropping. The Black land-owning farmers were targeted by the Ku Klux Klan for the audacity to own their own land—there were lynchings and cross burnings, a litany of violent acts against folks on the land. Land was the scene of the crime. I believe that trauma is inherited. There's some science that shows it actually alters your gene expression.

And so when folks come back to the land, there can be a trigger response—like, *I'm not stooping, I'm not getting dirty, this reminds me of slavery.* And so part of the work we need to do—and this is work we need to do for ourselves within the Black and Brown community; it's not anything that anyone else can or should do for us—is about healing and reconnecting and understanding that the land was not the criminal. The land has always been an ally and support to us. In African cosmology we understand that our ancestors contact us through our physical relationship with the earth. They give us guidance and love and messages and so if we don't have that direct access to the land there's a piece of wisdom that we're missing.

What that looks like at Soul Fire is we're using those same Afro-Indigenous tools. We're using drumming and singing, spiritual baths, storytelling as means of reconnecting to the land in a way that feels healthy and whole and based on free choice and dignity, as opposed to oppression and restraint.

Sky: So it's a very holistic thing: the connections between growing food and systemic injustice and deep spiritual healing. Is there more that you can say to articulate this very holistic vision for all that you're working with?

Leah: I would say our big end game as Soul Fire Farm is to, as Black and Brown people, reclaim our inherent right to belong to the earth and to have agency and decision making in the food system. Part of that certainly is technical. It's about learning about land tenure models and soil testing and remediation. And part of that is about rekindling our sense of hope and belonging and agency and possibility.

One of the ways that the empire does its work is to convince us that our range of possibilities is much smaller than it really is. For example, for many young Black men, the only thing that the empire wants them to believe is in their future is compliance to a corporate model or they're going to be imprisoned or dead at an early age. So when young folks come out to the farm and they're like, "Wait a minute, you built that house? and you like hip hop? and you're growing food? and your momma lives here?" it's just blowing their minds because those were not given in the range of menu options. There's the technical knowledge but a big part is just about healing our sense of what's possible and believing in ourselves again and all the potential paths that our ancestors laid out for us and prepared for us—that we can reconnect to that destiny.

Sky: How do you see the role of allies in supporting the work that you all and the other groups you're connected to are doing?

Leah: As I mentioned earlier, I think that allies' work in reparations really has to follow the lead of individuals and collectives that are organized by the folks most impacted by that harm, so Black- and Indigenous-led collectives. Not everyone's

going to agree on what reparations should look like. Certainly when we put out the reparations map there were folks in our wider circles—national Black-led organizations—who were like, "Actually we were trying to think about reparations in this other way, we want to have a collective pot and we distribute it"—and that's totally legit too. I also would caution against imagining that any person of color speaks for the whole. But it really is nothing for us without us. So...taking leadership from Black- and Indigenous-led organizations.

We spent some time surveying mostly Black returning-generation farmers to ask what needs to change in the system, where do we need to put resources, what policies need to change, what should allies be doing? If you go to soufirefarm.org, under the Support page there's a Take Action link that has this all laid out, so anyone can give input. And chapter 16 in *Farming While Black* is all dedicated to allies so it has a lot more detail about what it really means to pass the oars and follow the lead of folks of color in terms

Much of our work is about healing and reconnecting and understanding that the land was not the criminal.



of reparations work.

Sky: What are questions that I should be asking you that I haven't asked you yet?

Leah: I'll add one more thing. As we talk about the land I think it's really important for us to remember that the land is not a commodity or just a material entity. Again harkening back to Afro-Indigenous cosmology, the land is a living, breathing, sovereign being. I have spiritual mentors in Ghana, west Africa, called the Queen Mothers, or *manye*, and they were really incredulous to learn that farmers in the United States would plant a seed and they wouldn't pray over it, or dance, or offer any libation, and they expected that seed to grow and produce nourishing food for the community. And they were like, "That's why your society is sick, clearly, because you're just seeing this as a transactional relationship with the earth—input, output."

So when we talk about land sovereignty, or farming, or any of this stuff, we have to remember to really pay attention to the needs of the earth. Industrial agriculture is destroying the planet, is a major driver of climate change, of land use conversions and water withdrawals. We know how to do an agriculture that's different, that can feed the planet without destroying the resource base. And we both need to do that in a material sense, through those actions, and also to consider the earth as living.

We spend a lot of time offering prayer and song and even using tools like divination to find out if the land agrees with a

plan that we have. One thing that's really great about the legal team we're working with in creating this new co-op to own our land is we're asking, "What is the legal precedent for giving personhood to the land?" because we want to put that into the bylaws of the organization. So they've been looking internationally and found, for example, in New Zealand the court gave personhood to a river. So we're building some of that into these western legal documents. We're very excited about taking these tools and making them do what we want them to do.

Sky: I'm reminded of the Rights of Nature work happening especially in Latin America. It's along these lines of de-commodifying and recognizing personhood in nature. This whole fundamental questioning of basic assumptions around private property is something that we're increasingly trying to press on with the FIC—assumptions about privacy, ownership, all of these sort of things that we just take so for granted in society. When you really start looking at it, the idea of private property is absurd.

Leah: It's absurd! Owning a section of the earth?

Sky: That only you get to decide what happens on it and it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks and how it might impact...it's so weird when you really start to think about it.

Leah: Yes. I'm checking out Rights of Nature too. We're learning a lot as we go and it's cool because even though we're so at the beginning of all of this, people

in our community are so thirsty for it they're trying to model stuff after us and they're just three months behind us. It's pretty exciting.

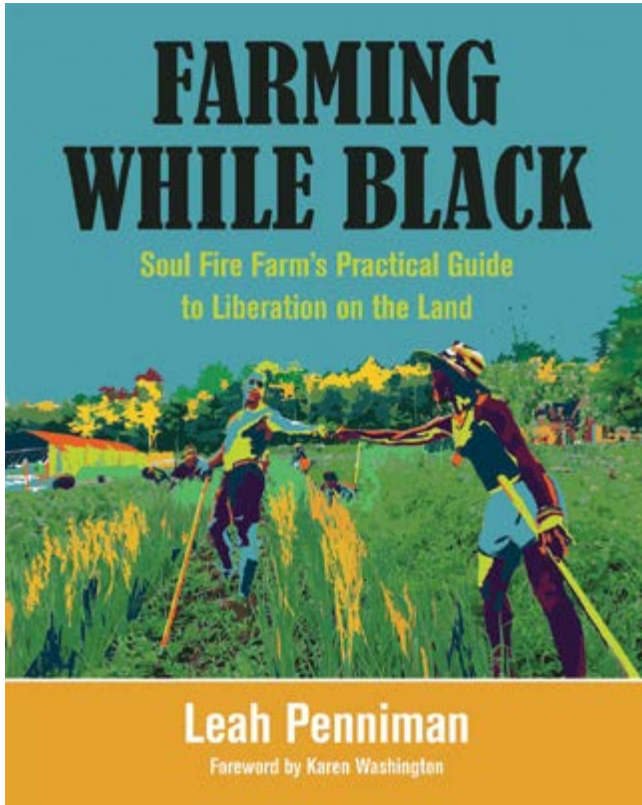
Sky: Any other last thoughts?

Leah: No... Thank you for asking provocative questions! 🌱

Leah Penniman is a Black Kreyol farmer who has been tending the soil for 22 years and organizing for an anti-racist food system for 16 years. Her book Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land offers the first comprehensive manual for African-heritage people ready to reclaim their rightful place of agency in the food system. It includes stories from her work developing Soul Fire Farm; concise how-to guidance for all aspects of small-scale farming, including finding land and resources, writing a farm business plan, preserving the harvest and saving seed, and other essential areas; and sections on honoring the spirits of the land, healing from trauma, movement building, uprooting racism, and more. It is available through Communities Bookstore at ic.org/bookstore. See also the review by Ira Wallace on page 19.

Sky Blue is Executive Director of the Fellowship for Intentional Community. A veteran of Twin Oaks Community and before that a housing collective, a student housing cooperative, and a cohousing community, and initiator of two small worker cooperatives and a small car-sharing system, he has dedicated much of his adult life to furthering the larger cooperative movement.





Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land

By Leah Penniman

Chelsea Green, October 2018, paperback (8" x 10"), full color photos and illustrations throughout, 368 pages. Available from Communities Bookstore (ic.org/bookstore).



This is the most inspiring garden book I have read in years, and in my work with Southern Exposure Seed Exchange I read a lot of books about farming and food justice. The author Leah Penniman is a Black Kreyol from New England, where farmers of color are rare and even more so in the “Good Food” and cooperative farming circles. As a young person in love with the land and looking to become a farmer, Leah questioned whether she had a place in farming. This book is written for young Black, Brown, and Latinx people like her 17-year-old self, but it is also a gift to all of us who care about farming, equality, and justice.

Leah covers the usual farming topics well, spiced with family and cultural wisdom from African and Caribbean cultures. She also shines a light on the shameful and continuing unjust treatment of Black and Brown people who farm. I loved the section called “Uplift,” spread throughout the book, lifting up the many agricultural achievements of people in the African Diaspora. Leah also shares the hard-earned success gained by all the members of the Soul Fire Farm team as they built a functioning and productive farm, starting with degraded hillside land not deemed appropriate for farming. The farm supports itself and educates youth while offering good food on a sliding-fee basis to a community suffering “Food Apartheid.”

Farming While Black offers some the best lists of resources I've seen, both conventional and uncommon, including Black-led training programs for young farmers. Leah is not afraid to bring up tough subjects like the implications of white farmers asking Black and Brown people to work for no pay doing jobs that primarily benefit the landowner. She also challenges people of European de-

scend to look at how they have benefited from wealth created by the historic unpaid labor of Black people. This historic injustice still lives when for every \$100 in white family wealth, Black families hold just \$5.04. Leah also shares stories of specific acts of reparations, where people of European descent have transferred part of their land to descendants of those peoples who created that wealth.

There are many excellent chapters on the nitty-gritty of farming, covering problems often overlooked—problems associated with “cheaper” land that is more financially affordable. She talks about how Haitian farmers work to remediate soil by planting perennial vetiver grass on contour and using specific plants to chelate lead from contaminated city land. Unlike many books, Leah's includes raising livestock as a part of crop planning as well as how white allies can be helpful in uprooting racism in our food and farming system. For an excellent longer review by Pam Dawling of Twin Oaks Community, visit www.sustainablemarketfarming.com/2018/11/13/book-review-farming-while-black-leah-penniman, or better still just go ahead and buy the book! (Avoid the internet commerce giants by ordering from FIC at ic.org/community-bookstore/product/farming-while-black.) All author proceeds from this book will be donated to provide land and training for Black farmers! 🐦

Ira Wallace is a long-time communitarian, cofounder of Acorn Community in Virginia, co-coordinator of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, 2014 recipient of the FIC's Kozeny Communitarian Award, and author of The Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast.

Land Speaking through the People: The Great Work of Our Times

By Cassandra Ferrera

Author's acknowledgment: I am a 47-year-old white, middle-class woman. I live on land that was once stewarded by the Pomo peoples with whom I have little current direct relationship except through the prayers, offerings, and visions that I receive. It is a tremendous privilege and responsibility to be involved in the experiment of intentional community and how to transition land into seventh generation stewardship.



**Community land
is the place where
the fabric
begins to mend.**

Just about every aspect of the human project needs our attention now as the ecological and social crises of our times intensify. My attention is focused on how we can reimagine and experience our relationship with the land as communities of place-based people. Professionally, I have been a real estate agent for the last 13 years providing agency and consultation to groups and individuals. Personally, I have cofounded two intentional communities and a community land trust. These threads weave together in my passion and purpose as an activist, consultant, and educator in service to the transition from private property to cooperative stewardship.

This transition is occurring in a myriad of forms right now, ranging from small-scale family farms to various sizes of intentional community, a growing community land trust movement, and even national-scale movements integrating land trusts, new types of real estate cooperatives, and a vibrant indigenous- and POC-led movement to counterbalance the great economic and racial injustices of our times.

Intentional communities are positioned to help the world answer some of the most vexing and crucial questions of our times. Many of us are asking ourselves questions about what we own privately, what we steward as a group, and how we make decisions about all of this together. These are especially potent agreements to navigate with regard to land and home.

In our humble little or audaciously large experiments, we often come to the intentional-community table with the economic disparities of the system we were born into, putting conversations of equity, security, power, and legacy in the center of our circle to support and create the transition into a future that is healed of the territorial wars of the past.

Private and divided, our culture and the private lands upon which we live can reflect us as a privately broken and divided people. Community land is the place where the fabric begins to mend, and the land and the people can heal together.

We arrive at that table with the great injustices of our times both as problems to address collectively and as personal circumstances that vary greatly. These include economic disparity, white privilege, differences in emotional experience, nervous

system regulation, and spiritual beliefs. How much we have done “our work” or have just been surviving? And here we are at the round table of collective decision making. Doing this world work is no small task.

Luckily, as we address these huge internal and external challenges, we have the land itself to turn to for guidance and support.

One of the most obvious and most pressing inquiries is simply to ask the question: “Who owns the land?” We must ask ourselves this question as we seek to discover the power and privileges that come with land ownership. I know firsthand that it can be very challenging as a private property owner to stand back and look at our circumstance with a wider lens. In capitalism, ownership has conferred to us an experience of security, power, rights, and the ability to accumulate and extract value from land. In stewardship, we realize that what we call ownership is actually a humbling and great responsibility.

Many well-intentioned projects are distorted and weakened at their base because they have neglected to work out a pathway for “ownership” for members. Unpacking this idea of ownership a bit, we can see that what people usually need is security, equity, and agency.

Ultimately, we must pull apart the concepts that are bundled into the legal fiction we call private property ownership and address the questions of power, responsibility, equity, security, and legacy.

Corrina Gould is a cofounder of the Sogorea Te Community Land Trust, an urban, indigenous, women-led community organization that facilitates the return of Chochenyo and Karkin Ohlone lands in the San Francisco Bay Area to indigenous stewardship. She reminds us that the question of who owns the land is a colonial question. Settlers introduced

that idea to indigenous peoples.

Other questions we can ask are: Who is responsible for this land? Who is in deep relationship with this land? Who is listening to this land? What is the history and seventh generation legacy of this land?

These questions do not lead us to private property rights. They lead us to cooperative stewardship. How do we create council-based stewardship of land that will last and renew itself many lifetimes beyond ours? How can our community land trust boards and our intentional community governance agreements become indigenously-informed stewardship circles?

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer writes, “In the face of such loss, one thing our people could not surrender was the meaning of the land. In the settler mind, land was property, real estate, capital, or natural resources. But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was a gift, not a commodity, so it could never be bought or sold.” She goes on to say, “land held in common gave people strength; it gave them something to fight for. And so—in the eyes of the federal government—that belief was a threat.”

We must listen to indigenous wisdom. And...we live in an era of unbridled technology, and our modernized experience must be woven with our histories to create a future that is beyond the territorialism that has been part of the human experience with land through history. Our indigenous ancestors fought over land and territories, but they didn’t possess the technology that could destroy so much life. We now do. Our “exponential



Photos courtesy of Cassandra Ferrara

technologies” have taken us to the limits of the earth’s resources, threatening so much of life on earth.

Daniel Schmachtenberger of the Collective Insights podcast lays it bare in his analysis of all of this and brings it down to the equation *exponential technology + finite resources + rivalry = destruction of civilization*. This pattern has played itself out throughout human history on smaller scales, and now the stakes are as high as they have ever been. Robert Gilman of the Context Institute describes three eras of human history: Tribal, Empire, and Planetary. His perspective and analysis compel us to see that we are at the end of Empire. We must steward forth the Planetary era in which our technologies have connected us worldwide. Our understanding of the biosphere and our human impact is at hand, and we must transition from the view of the planet as ownable by private interests.

Fighting over land and the power it conveys is the basis of the rivalry that we humans must address immediately. Private property cannot be the basis of the Planetary Era.

The idea and the institution of private property—this dinosaur of legal fiction that some of our ancestors created—often seems too big to tackle...and yet we must.

“Through the eye of the needle, we tried to move the stone, so heavy from its history of shame and blood and bone. Gather the hands to move the stone, sing it up to the heavens, let it rain down on us all.”—Xavier Rudd

Communities are in a position to lift up the stories that show how we are putting the land back into the commons and sorting out how to live together in non-rivalrous, cooperative governance systems.

One beautiful way of looking at this is to see that we are doing the work of weaving three story threads together. In her book *If Women Rose Rooted*, Sharon Blackie (who is of Celtic ancestry) describes these three threads in the following way:

The first thread is our own indigenous ancestries from wherever our bloodlines have traveled across the planet. Sharon suggests that we do what we can to learn the stories of the land and the people from whence we came. The second thread is the stories of the land where we live and our place ancestors. We must come to know and respect the stories of the people and the land below our feet. The third thread is the story of how we are weaving the first two threads together in what we are doing to restore intimacy with the land in the places we live.

In a podcast interview Sharon asked Pat McCabe (Woman Stands Shining, Diné) one of the big questions of our time: How do white settlers find their stories of the land in a place where stories are populated by another people? How do people in America find our own stories so we don’t appropriate yours?

While acknowledging that there is great reason to be sensitive to appropriation, Pat responded that it is the birthright of all of us to

call out to Mother Earth. She says that while indigenous cultures have maintained relationship with Mother Earth and the Cosmos along well-worn trails, we can still bushwhack our way up the mountainside. That process might lead to dead-ends or dangerous places, but we have to work it out. When asked how to recreate a relationship with the land, Pat suggests to go out in the morning to your altar and be in the songs. You have a right to do that.

Somehow each of us must go out to the land and make our offerings and begin to listen, and together as communities we must learn that the way forward into the planetary era beyond private property will also depend on how well we can do this together. We have much to learn, but the movement is afoot and the land is holding the stories of both our brokenness and our wholeness.

“In this time it isn’t Indians versus Cowboys. No. This time it is all the beautiful races of humanity together on the SAME side and we are fighting to replace our fear with LOVE. This time bullets, arrows, and cannon balls won’t save us. The only weapons that are useful in this battle are the weapons of truth, faith, and compassion.” – Lyla June, Diné (Navajo)

I went down to the great California Bay Laurel tree that sprawls magnificently at the property line where the creek flows onto the land I co-steward. The barbed wire used long ago has now been completely engulfed by one of the many trunks of this tree and dangles out of the center of the trunk. We call her Wholly Tree because she is Holy, and Hole-y, and her long life now presents with every life stage from sprout to ancient cavernous snag. She is one of our medicine trees, and I turn to her for advice.

On this day, I sat with her with a question about Community Land Trusts. I had felt that years ago I had been sort of possessed by the “spirit of the CLT” and I wished to know what the spirit of the CLT was. This is what came as I sat with her. “The Spirit of community

land trusts is the spirit of the land speaking through the people: the part of us that knows that the land cannot be owned. Land is sentient and is our partner. Land is a responsibility and an obligation to tend the elements and the source of life. This cannot be done alone; that is why we steward as a community of people embedded in and as an Earth Community. Remembering and creating how to do this is the great work of our times.” 🌿

Cassandra Ferrera lives with her family at Landwell in Sebastopol, California, which is a new land-based community of 26 people on 22 acres committed to healing and restoring our sacred relationship with place. She is an educator, activist, and consultant dedicated to cooperative stewardship. Cassandra serves on the Board of the Fellowship for Intentional Community and also of Common-Space Community Land Trust and her real estate license is with Green Key Real Estate. Her website is www.cassandraferrera.net.

The Dilemmas of Being a Benefactor: Creating a Community Land Trust

By Carolyn North

For Darryl, Kate, Cassandra, and Jerry

When Herb, my husband of many decades, died almost four years ago, I was left with an inheritance just gracious enough to realize a lifelong ambition to buy a farm in order to give it away. That is, I have dreamed of removing land from the speculative market economy and putting it into the public trust in order to challenge our assumptions about what is called “private property.” The idea of owning pieces of the earth and doing with it whatever we pleased seemed crazy to me. I didn’t believe in it for a minute, so this windfall of discretionary money could be just the ticket to challenge it.

Our family home in Berkeley, California, where Herb and I lived our whole adult lives and raised our three children, is a funky brown-shingle house that we bought in the 1960s for \$28,000 and is now worth millions in the current marketplace, meaning that most young families, such as we once were, could not afford to live here.

Frankly, that gives me a stomach ache.

So I wished to model something different with the money I’d been left, and help create an affordable, not-for-profit example of diverse community on protected land in perpetuity. As an artist and healer with little savvy about finance, I had no idea how to even begin.

It happened then that Eden, a young student of mine who lived in Sonoma County and could not find anything affordable to rent there, told me about a small farm in her area that was up for sale, and was I interested? Sure, I replied, but next year, maybe, after I’ve gotten through this first year of grieving and had my life put back together. The last thing I needed at that moment was a real estate deal!

But the farm was up for sale *then*, and Eden and other friends in the area needed housing they could afford *then*, and the seller, hoping to sell to visionary folks who would use that land well, was selling low—*then*. It was now or never. I seemed to have no choice but to go for it, so with my heart in my mouth, I did, figuring that if not now, then when?; if not me, then who?

That’s when the magic started happening; I learned that Darryl and Sara, old friends from years before, were also seeking housing they could afford in the area, so with them and Eden and her boyfriend Dan I had a ready-made community happy to move in as soon as possible. Sara is one of my favorite gardeners, Darryl is an alternative builder interested in affordable cooperative housing, and they were as enthusiastic to help found a Trust as I was. So the stage was set and in short order we were ready to go!

That is, they were ready to go; I was still in deep mourning and really not ready to go anywhere. I needed time to grieve. But the world was in a hurry and I seemed to have no choice. Really, I had little idea what in the world I was getting into!

Aside from all the legal details and hidden costs, the inspections and the taxes and



Susan Wilson

the infinite paperwork, I had not begun to imagine that I would now be defined in people's minds as a "landowner." One person saw an opportunity to take advantage of the "rich widow," nearly breaking me in the process; to others, I was regarded as a "white privileged lady"; some became shy, some fawning. I was now considered almost a different species from ordinary folks.

Yikes!

I was still very vulnerable—way too shaky to have to fight off sharks—and I considered just dropping the whole thing and letting the guy who wanted to use it as speculation just have it. But then I got mad. NO! I was on my own now, and would stand up for myself. So I put up my dukes and fought—and, in the end, won the day. The sweet little farm on a lane in the floodplain of the Laguna Santa Rosa, with horses nearby and badger holes in the field, with its creek bordered by big old trees, with its old barn and sweet farmhouse, and the old chicken coop now a modest studio—was mine, to do with as I wished.

And I would turn it over to the public trust! All I had to do was figure out how.

After the hiatus of high drama, and the inevitable fits and starts of a bright idea, the magic began to happen again.

It became clear that as we fit neither the parameters of ordinary land trusts nor of low-income housing organizations—our goal being to somehow combine the two—that meant we would have to create our own niche. So when Eden noticed a blurb in the newspaper about a gathering in a local café to talk about Community Land Trusts, we showed up. There we met, and quickly bonded with Cassandra, a real estate agent, Jerry, a retired lawyer, and Kate, a founder of a small ecovillage, all of whom were passionate on the subject of affordable housing and community.

By the following weekend we knew we wanted to work (and play) together—actually, we sort of fell in love with each other! Our first move was to have a gathering of everyone we knew who might be interested, asking them to come out to the farm for a conversation about affordable housing in the area. It was a lively, passionate afternoon, and from that group we chose five people who wished to go the course with us, forming a volunteer task force to create a bona fide nonprofit Community Land Trust.

A week later we got started, the five of us agreeing to meet every two weeks until we'd done the job. And we did. It took us less than two years to work through all the bylaws and legalities, the Articles of This and That, and eventually we got our 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. A great day! We put out the word for applications to the Board, got more enthusiastic people than we even needed, chose a name—CommonSpace CLT—created a website, and with a lick and a prayer we launched.

If I may say so myself, we were brilliant!

What is so wonderful about this kind of renegade activity in hard times is that the best and the brightest seem to show up out of the woodwork, ready to combine their strengths, smarts, and

humor, bring in others who are perfect fits with energy to burn, and create new things on the old horizon. We truly had the best time and it worked!

Residents have a lease and pay rent, though our goal is to have a long-term lease arrangement. Residents' rent cannot exceed 30 percent of their income and is protected, by the CLT, from uncontrolled escalation. The rents go to the nonprofit, but residents have input and some control of how the money is used. Portions of it go to support the CLT, a portion goes to insurance and taxes, a portion goes into a long-term repair fund for large items—like a new roof, for example—and the rest goes into maintenance, repair, and new projects on the land. The vision we are trying to advance in this project is long-term, stable housing with rents kept at affordable rates, with land owned by a nonprofit and cared for as a community asset.

Now that the CommonSpace Community Land Trust is a reality, I am hoping that our little homestead will provide a model for others to follow. I imagine other homesteads in the neighborhood becoming community with us, exchanging help and produce, eggs and honey, farm equipment and friend-

ship. Already, classes on beekeeping are happening there, and a labyrinth-garden for medicinal herbs. Braids of drying garlic are hanging in the barn and a small orchard is planted. I am seeing community happening naturally there by the Laguna, starting with this sweet little place with the creek flowing by and the gardens thriving.

When it was time to dissolve our wonderful cohort who had done the work, and open it up to the residents and the community at large, we knew we'd bonded like family for good.

You can meet us—Darryl Berlin and Cassandra Ferrera and Kate Yates and Jerry Green and myself, Carolyn North—on our website: www.commonspaceclt.org.

Here is our mission statement:

- To remove land from the speculative market in perpetuity, providing attainable access to land, quality housing, sustainable agriculture and woodland, cooperative communities, and cottage industries.
- To develop practices that steward, preserve, protect, and heal the natural environment—its land, air, and waters.
- To demonstrate this stewardship of the environment and attainable housing by providing information, resources, replicable models, and expertise to the general public.

Note that CommonSpace is made up of several words: Commons, Space, and *Pace*, meaning peace.

May all beings find peace.

With my deep thanks to Herb who made this all possible. 🌱

**I am hoping that
our little homestead
will provide a model
for others to follow.**

You can reach the author, CommonSpace Community Land Trust cofounder Carolyn North, at carolyn.north@gmail.com. Find the CommonSpace website at www.commonspaceclt.org.

Cross-Class Cooperation and Land Access

By Yana Ludwig

Every community that owns property and whose “origin story” I know has a few things in common: someone(s) with passion for doing something you can’t easily do within the mainstream culture, a combination of persistence and luck, and one or more people with enough class privilege involved to get the thing landed. While we talk about the first thing a lot, and the second thing some, the third element is one we either treat as an “of course” or never really think and talk much about at all. I’d like to change that.

I think it is increasingly important to not only talk about the role class privilege plays in our movement, but also celebrate the ways that cross-class cooperation can be a form of solidarity that is very much needed at this time. Land access is a fundamental barrier to many things in the US: being able to grow your own food, being able to build equity and wealth, being able to have a direct and daily relationship with the natural world, and being able to start an intentional community are just a few areas in which lack of enough wealth to own property further limits our capacity to have our dreams become realities.

Much work has been done on land and property access inequities, including detailed studies of practices within the banking industry such as “redlining” (where banks used to literally draw red lines on a map indicating where they would and would not give loans to mostly Black families) and the ripple effect those practices have had on the discrepancies between Black and white families and intergenerational wealth building. (An article on www.citylab.com from April 2018 called “How the Fair Housing Act Failed Black Homeowners” is one good intro to this topic.) Groups such as Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi and the People of Color Sustainable Housing Network in the Bay Area understand the importance of restoring access to land as part of an overall

strategy of racial justice.

In my experience, the main reason intentional communities fail is social dynamics: we aren’t taught by our culture how to get along, make decisions collectively, and resolve conflicts, and lacking those skills, lots of groups flounder. But I am also increasingly tuned in to how many groups simply never get the chance to fail because of economics. If you don’t have people with some wealth involved or at least people who have done well enough to be able to get bank financing, then a lot of dreams die as wee sprouts.

I’ve been part now of multiple intentional community start-up attempts. In the two cases where we got far enough along to be ready for the property acquisition phase, one of the critical determiners of failure or success was whether or not we had the presence of cross-class cooperation: Were folks with access to resources willing to put those resources on the table at the critical moment or not? In one case, there was just not enough of that to be able to tie up property, and in the other case there was. The result?

My startup in Laramie, Wyoming landed, whereas the one I worked on a dozen years before in Albuquerque, New Mexico didn’t.

Part of my motivation in writing this particular article is to put a bug in the ears of middle- and upper-class readers of *COMMUNITIES*. Class is similar to race and gender in that oppression based on these categories needs to be addressed by the folks who have the power: you have to take seriously that classism is a thing, and ask what you can do to end the power imbalances you are currently benefiting from to others’ detriment. Just as sexism will only end when men do their work and racism will only end when white people do theirs, people with class privilege are in the responsibility seat with ending classism.

I’ve been thinking a lot about reparations lately in the context of my own work around ending racism. A lot of folks think reparations are a fine idea but they struggle with what exactly that would look like. I’ve slowly come to the conclusion that it doesn’t look like “a” thing and that trying to figure out “the” answer is stopping a lot



Photo courtesy of Cynthia Tina

of white folks from being able to do something tangible that will amount to embodying reparations. As an example of individual acts I'm working on engaging in to embody reparations: I'm working to cede talk time to people of color regularly in conversations, and I've offered to a teaching partner who is a person of color to have them take home a higher percentage of the money we make in any work we do together. These are both actions that move beyond "nice thoughts" and into starting to shift power relationships.

I think there is a parallel around class dynamics. Individuals and organizations can take concrete steps to change both the narrative on worth and worthiness of getting needs met, and the concrete deleterious effects of that narrative on people's ability to get their needs met. One of the organizations I work for, which was until recently an all-volunteer effort, has recently begun paying poor and working-class folks for the same work that middle- and upper-are still asked to do as volunteers. This is a concrete recognition that some people can afford to volunteer while others can't, and it makes possible the inclusion of poor and working-class people in work they'd otherwise be cut out of.

So how does this apply to the communities movement? In our movement's case, "land access" has a lot of overlap with "communities that are accessible" because we are a fundamentally land-based movement. I think a series of inquiries would be helpful at this time to help us start to shift away from oppressive thinking and dynamics between members of our communities. These inquiries are first and foremost for people who have class privilege now. (Note: class privilege can seem a bit murky, but if you make 50 percent more than the living wage for your area, own outright assets such as a home or other property, are debt-free, have a trust fund, and/or are secure in your retirement, I'm probably talking to you. I'm also talking to you if you manage significant assets for someone else where you have some say about how those assets are invested or otherwise dispersed.)

1) Are there ways that I can embody class solidarity by using the resources I have to insure our community is financially accessible to people without similar privilege? (Hint: loan funds are less effective for this than sliding scales, gift funds, and simply paying for things you don't expect others to similarly fund.)

2) Am I willing to forgo my earning of equity in this project, recognizing that the earning of equity is embedded in an oppressive economic system that is available unevenly to different people in this group, and means others will have to struggle more?

3) Can I commit to acting in solidarity with working-class people in tangible ways? Examples of this are: not advocating for meetings or all the fun stuff happening during work hours, not asking working-class and poor people to pay for childcare to participate, not throwing parties that will cause pain to less wealthy people (such as slideshows about what I did on my summer vacation that often amount to wealth displays), and recognizing that working-class and poor people generally have not only less money but less "free time" to contribute, and not shaming them or creating participation barriers based on what they can or can't contribute.

4) Can I commit to learning about classism and wealth discrepancies, such as checking out the Class Action website (www.classism.org), and encouraging my group to get full-group training around these issues?

5) Do I have concrete assets that I could flat out give the group, such as land or funding for a no-questions-asked emergency fund?

6) Can I consider being part of an income-sharing community where my higher wages and assets could help materially support others on a daily basis? (You can also do this at a sub-community level, such as the Income Share group I'm supporting developing within Bellingham Cohousing.)

7) Can I offer critical support such as childcare, transportation, and help filling out governmental assistance paperwork to folks who need these things in my group?

8) Can I do things like these without asking to be thanked for it, but simply because it is the right thing to do in terms of balancing the scales of justice?

There are also many initiatives you can support to help us all embody a new paradigm beyond class oppression. These include individual communities like Cooperation Jackson, the Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Cooperative, and multiple sub-networks including People of Color Sustainable Housing Network and income-sharing groups (some of whom are organized by the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, www.thefec.org). Broader ways to explore these issues are by checking out the New Economy Coalition's work, and my own (working-class) community's podcast, Solidarity House, which looks at cooperative systems through a liberatory framework.

You can also get behind the Fellowship for Intentional Community's initiative to create the national Community Land Trust for Collective Liberation. This new initiative is being created to hold property for groups who could otherwise not afford to create community, and to remove land permanently from the speculative real estate market (which over time drives up the cost of land for all of us). The CLT will be a place of radical solidarity between poor and working-class people, people of color, and the land. The project will use the frameworks of intentional community and community land trusts, and is part of a larger growing movement toward cooperative culture, collective liberation, and racial and economic justice.

FIC wants to use this project to ask ourselves and the communities movement as a whole questions about what reparations and decolonization mean within our movement. These are hard and important questions, and we hope you will join us in asking them. And we absolutely will need cross-class cooperation to pull this off: my best estimate of an initial five-year operating plus land-purchasing budget is somewhere in the ballpark of \$20 million.

Cross-class solidarity has always played a role in our movement. I'm hoping that role will be more acknowledged, deliberate, and celebrated as we move forward, collectively. 🐦

Yana Ludwig is a cooperative culture pioneer, intentional communities advocate, and anti-oppression activist. She serves on the board of the Fellowship for Intentional Community and works as a local chapter coach for Showing Up for Racial Justice. Her latest book, Together Resilient: Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption, was awarded the Communal Studies Association 2017 Book of the Year Award. She is a podcast host on Solidarity House (advocating for cooperative culture and economics) and a founding member of the Solidarity Collective, an income-sharing community in Laramie, Wyoming.

How We Came to Inherit a Salmon Stream

By Kirsten Rohde

Before the non-Indians came, tribes managed the natural resources and protected them. We were taught that if you take care of the land and the resources, the land will take care of you.

—N. Kathryn “Kat” Brigham, Chair of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

My strength is from the fish; my blood is from the fish, from the roots and berries. The fish and game are the essence of my life. I was not brought from a foreign country and did not come here. I was put here by the Creator.

—Chief Weninock, Yakama¹, 1915

I don't believe in magic. I believe in the sun and the stars, the water, the tides, the floods, the owls, the hawks flying, the river running, the wind talking. They're measurements. They tell us how healthy things are. How healthy we are. Because we and they are the same. That's what I believe in.

—Billy Frank, Jr., Nisqually Tribe



Photos courtesy of Kirsten Rohde

We are standing on the washed-out county road next to Sahale, our community home, with a dozen people from Washington State Fish and Wildlife, the county road department, and the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group. I ask, “So with the flood, the salmon stream has jumped its banks and is now flowing through our meadow. Would it be OK if we just let it stay there?” After some exploration of the situation the answer was, “Yes!” This is the story of how a historic Northwest storm brought us our very own salmon stream to shepherd.

Members of the Goodenough Community, long dreaming for land for a residential community and a retreat center, found our rural land in 2001 and named it Sahale Learning Center and Eco-Village. With 68 acres bordering on the Tahuya River, we became stewards not only of the land but of the salmon who swim from the Hood Canal up the river each year to spawn. North of Sahale, a creek ran down from Jiggs Lake, through the ravine, under the county road, and then along the property line north of us on Fish and Wildlife property which houses a salmon hatchery. The creek continued down to the Tahuya River through wetlands on the state

property. In early December of 2007 a major storm came through western Washington, now officially named the “Great Coastal Gale of 2007.” This caused landslides and flooded many places including putting parts of Interstate 5 underwater. The Tahuya Peninsula and Sahale were completely cut off for several days. None of us were out there when the storm hit and we had to call a neighbor to come down and feed our dog, Sam.

When we did get out to Sahale the Jiggs Lake Creek was filled with many feet of rock and gravel from a massive mudslide up the ravine, and part of the road was caved in. The salmon hatchery had broken pipes and the salmon fry that would have been released in February were lost. Downstream where I lived, I walked out on the back porch and could see that the flooding Tahuya River covered the entire meadow beyond. The Jiggs Lake Creek had jumped its banks and had changed from a gentle stream to a small river also flowing through the meadow.

We found one of the old stream outlets into the river and cleared out rock and gravel and tried to create a dike. As is the way with nature, the stream still went out of its bed every win-

1. www.critfc.org/member Tribes Overview/the-confederated-tribes-and-bands-of-the-yakama-nation

ter with regular flooding. Salmon were flopping around all over the meadow and back yard. I'll never forget picking up huge slimy wriggling fish and running to the stream to toss them back in.

I contacted the director of the salmon enhancement group, which is restoring native runs of salmon in our region. I asked him about diking and clearing rocks from the stream to create a channel. He had a stream engineer create drawings of the perfect salmon stream. When I had someone out who could do the work he told me it would be \$30,000. Please. He also said, don't bother, just let the stream create its way naturally over time. A good idea which proved to be correct.

In 2011, the salmon enhancement group received a grant to drop 60 Douglas firs, roots and all, into selected spots along the Tahuya River to help form deeper channels for salmon habitat. The river had flattened out and was shallower than was good for the salmon. They used our largest meadow as a staging ground to collect all the trees and then selectively placed them in the river from a Chinook helicopter. They also placed two large trees on the south side of the salmon stream, creating a much more permanent dike that was been

very effective over the years.

Yearly, we did plantings of native trees, shrubs, and grasses along the stream. Willows naturally started to populate and we put out more willow stakes to fill in until the larger trees took off. Unfortunately, nature was also planting reed canary grass, blackberries, and other invasive plants faster than we could get our trees and shrubs established. With the blackberries in some places growing higher than us, it can sometimes feel like one step forward, two steps back. A meditation on nature's inexorable path to abundance is good to do when we're out there.

The beavers cut down several maturing trees and have chopped down the same cottonwood three times so far, moving the wire cage right off it. And yet there are cedars, willows, cottonwood, Oregon ash, native hawthorn, shore pines, ninebark, salmonberry, serviceberry, Nootka roses, Douglas spirea, dogwood, and many other plants growing on the stream banks, providing stream protection and abundant food for wildlife.

In the process of stewarding a salmon stream, we have made friends with some people from county agencies. They love that we want to work with them and we have

learned so much about protecting salmon. One year several Sahale residents volunteered at the hatchery, checking the salmon fry daily and helping to release them into the stream. Collaboration with the County Noxious Weeds team led to a day of volunteer blackberry clearing on our stream.

Most of all every year the salmon return and make their way up the stream. We can see them spawning right in front of us. Every winter and spring the small fry are in the stream on their way to what is a several years' journey to the ocean before they return. Sometimes we see steelhead coming up. The heron comes by daily at times; river otters poke their heads up. The beavers shop for trees; deer graze along the streamside nipping off our new growth. It's a balance. Many birds make their homes along the stream. Ravens, turkey vultures, and eagles fly overhead and hawks perch on the tall cottonwood and maples.

The stream always changes course and there will always be some flooding and marshland. When I sit on my porch and look out I see an entirely different landscape from when I first moved here. Then I saw a grassy meadow that covered the entire area. Now this land is covered with trees, shrubs, and wetland—a whole new habitat is moving in.

This is the story of one of our sacred spots at Sahale. Living so close to the stream and always hearing it running by, I find it is dear to my heart. And when I am long gone, there will be tall trees, and well-established understory. No matter how many blackberries we cut down there will still be berries to eat. I hope there will always be some people who enjoy maintaining this very special place on our Sahale land. 🍓

Kirsten Rohde is a 30+ years member of the Goodenough Community located in northwest Washington State. She has lived at the community's rural retreat, Sahale Learning Center and EcoVillage, since 2006. She writes: "This land was historically inhabited by what is now known as the Skokomish Tribe, primarily composed of Twana Indians, a Salishan people whose aboriginal territory encompassed the Hood Canal drainage basin in western Washington State. We consider ourselves grateful stewards, rather than owners, of land that has been the home of indigenous peoples for a very long time before us."

Now this land is covered with trees, shrubs, and wetland.





Growing Together through Trauma, with the Land

By Tracy Matfin

Land creates a place of hopes and dreams. It is also the dirt, the more solid space beneath the sky upon which we walk and build our houses, and in which we grow our food. In a recent disaster experience I found out the land was a much larger source of “glue” to keep us together than I thought. The land was not only a place to be together, but also a foundation for the stability of our social experiment. Our community members use Nonviolent Communication (NVC), co-counseling, and a variety of other communication and personal growth tools to maintain harmony within the group. Yet when our needs for safety and security on the land upon which we live were under question our foundation was shaken, the structure of our intentional community nearly collapsed, and the reinforcement procedures have been challenging and enlightening reflections on human behavior.

On May 4th, 2018 a large 6.9 quake stirred the ground and the emotions of residents at La’akea Community in the district of Puna on the Big Island of Hawaii. Many of us were on the La’akea front porch as the ground pitched and rolled. A few ran away from the house, feeling more secure on the land. I held onto the post in the middle of the porch. My daughter and one of our members were at the Pahoia Island Naturals Grocery Store as glass bottles and many other things began falling off the shelves. They hurried home. For us this signaled the beginning of our Lavaland summer adventure. As the days progressed, cracks located a little over two miles downhill began spewing lava and evacuations began.

At first we appreciated our elevated distance as our air quality was excellent, sunshine glorious, the land abundant with food filling our food safe and refrigerator. The lava was staying further than two miles away, we had two evacuation routes, and civil defense was kindly—especially once presented with leis and homemade cookies! Roadblocks had been set up to limit traffic flow in and out of the lava zone. Placards were necessary

With our safety and security on the land under question, the structure of our intentional community nearly collapsed.

I tried NVC, I tried radical honesty, I tried crying, yelling, reasoning; nothing worked.



to travel the roads; proof that you lived in the area required. There were no highway noises. The helicopters were extensive but the peace was relaxing and very welcome as we were in this chaotic mind state of “what’s going to happen next.”

I had a 4 a.m. realization that though I consciously bought into a property on the rift zone with six others in 2005, I had never fully grokked (embodied the understanding) of what that meant. Major lava eruptions had occurred four years ago, 30 years ago, and 50 years ago. The likelihood of more was very, very high (and still is). I thought I was in for the ride. We are a permaculture community. What do you do when the going gets tough? You stick together, live off the land, and rough it.

Maybe not. On May 7th I left the land to drive my daughter to her school car-pool meet-up. When I attempted to return the road block guards would not let me back in. New cracks had shown up. The order had come through—no one allowed in the zone. I went on an emotional roller coaster. I tried NVC, I tried radical

honesty, I tried crying, yelling, reasoning; nothing worked. The guards would not let me back down the road to my community. My peeps were behind the lines, my home, my community, my life. I felt completely alone. This emotional chaos was happening all over Puna as it has happened all around the world and continues to happen more and more with the increasing number of natural disasters.

That same day Biko, Ruben, Aniko, and Kai left the land. We fled in different directions. Some of us went back to the land only to be evacuated with a siren escort by the end of the week. I’ve never lived in such uncertainty. The stress levels were extremely high. During one day in Pahoia I saw two physical fights break out—something I hadn’t seen in more than a decade of living here. It became clear to me that it was time to leave the area. So Ai’ala and I left. We were gone two months. During this time Prasad, Ananda, and Tamara mostly stayed on the land. Biko and JJ came and went at various times.

Here’s a quote from Ananda expressing herself during the time of the flow as she inhabited the land. “We live in the moment, with a respirator on hand and all necessities packed in the car so can leave at a moment’s notice. Madame Pele is the best teacher of living in the moment that I’ve ever had! (Note to self...Be Still and Breathe...)”

The lava was in full swing through July. At La’akea the Pele’s hair was everywhere. The three on the land got the glass splinters in their feet and hands and needed to be cautious to protect their eyes and lungs. An ominous black cloud hung above La’akea. The sky was dark, the generator ran every day, and it rained and rained below the black cloud. The eastern skyline was red as the lava light reflected off the clouds and I’m told the sounds were ominous. Mordore existed outside of Hollywood. More lava spewed out of those fissures in Leilani than all of the lava that came out of Pu’u O’o, the main eruptive spot on Kilauea, in 35 years! It inundated huge areas of farmland and local neighbor-

hoods, covering 700-plus homes including two communities (Pi'i Lani Farms and Pole Star), Green Lake, the warm ponds, Champagne Pond, and the tide pools. All gone except in memories, buried under rock. There are some amazing posts on Facebook, and the Wikipedia site on the lava flow 2018 is fairly extensive.

After almost three months of being gone, most of the members returned. Just over two weeks later, the lava stopped on August 5th. The plume that had been visible from the vent as a constant landmark disappeared. Spirits soared. Yet the fear still resided in many. Our community nearly collapsed as a prevalent question reverberated—stay or go? Alone or together? No one was working the land, the physical systems were barely maintained, the social systems ignored. Most wanted to go—buy land up the coast, out of lava zone 1 or 2. How? The economic value of our land had plummeted, no one would buy it right now, and none of us had enough cash/credit even if we pooled it all together. We came together on the land. If we left would we disperse? Our lives were strands that had been braided; now we were frayed.

The emotional climate was turbulent. One moment I could feel the collective vibrating in gratitude—We still have the land!, the next in anxiety—How much time do we have before the next eruption? This period of time was uncomfortable and disquieting. The collective shared

much of the experience yet we all had our unique ways of processing it. This was compounded by the fact that we did not all return to the land at the same time. So each time another member would come home we would all get to go through the same fears and the opportunity for personal choice anew.

Our dis-ease was apparent in the lack of excitement to care for our physical reality and the lack of commitment to our old structures of social harmony. I used to see our glue as our systems of connection, but without land security our glue was failing. From permaculture there's an idea of catching and storing energy. Our community's systems include a *common kitchen* where there's a common larder; a *morning check-in* to share ideas, feelings, needs, and daily goals; a weekly *heartshare* where we gather in the evening for some deeper sharing which may include touch and vulnerability; a weekly *business meeting* where all our decisions are made using consensus of the members.

These systems are pretty inclusive, but they work only if people feel safe and secure enough to participate and hold space for each other. Yes, I can hear the voice in my head saying "safety and security come from within." AND I know firsthand that sometimes when outside structures are not available to meet these needs I might shut down, be less vulnerable and less available. These structures work only if people participate. Deep sharing and vul-

nerability happen only when people show up. It's taken four-plus months to get people to feel safe enough to recommit to our dreams of this social experiment.

Now, five months later, I am experiencing a newfound security in our community. It has taken time, with all of its opportunities for self-reflection and communication. It has taken outside support, some mediation, and a lot of willing working hands. The evidence of our success prevails in the vegetables once again growing in the gardens, the newer members returning to the construction of their private sleeping places, and the increased participation in our systems of connection. This New Year's Day of 2019 when I thought I'd be one of the few folks at the main house at 9 a.m. I was greeted with the beautiful site of a porch full of 16 individuals gathered together to share our community ritual of a daily check-in.

This experience has humbled me. The resiliency of community has been shown and the power of connection demonstrated. The land, the physical place of our hopes and dreams, survived. We, the intentional community, have grown. 🌸

Tracy Matfin is an educator turned gardener, mother, permaculture instructor, and lover of life. She is a founding member of Lāakea Community (permaculture-hawaii.com) where she has been living and experimenting with sustainability and community living for more than 10 years.



Community, Land, Self: We're Part of the Same Elephant

By Chris Roth



Photos by Chris Roth

The story that follows may seem like a solo journey. It reflects, I recognize, a frequent fundamental self-conception by its author of being separate from those around him—of being on a unique path, responding to signals/messages that no one else was attuned to—of having a very personal relationship with the world, especially the land, one that often required shutting out interference from others' realities.

I share it because I suspect that many elements of it are not as unique as I may have believed at the time—that in fact every western individual's solo struggle is not actually unique at all. We share the same basic human needs, impulses, emotions, challenges—and we're living in the same time, although in different places and situations. We're all part of the same elephant, although most of us can't see it as an elephant. We're part of community even when we see ourselves as alone or on the peripheries of the communities we identify with; and our communities are part of society even when we feel very separate from it. There is no escape from the elephant we're all part of.

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My first intentional community experiences resulted from listening to the voices of the land, not of people. Transitioning from childhood to adulthood, several sudden rude awakenings led me to recognize that, rather than living in a world in which all was well, I was part of an ecocidal civilization which had already inflicted untold damage on the planet and on disadvantaged and earth-based peoples (and even on its own members, who were often both perpetrators and victims of its faulty premises).

Having grown up in East Coast suburbia, where that civilization seemed inescapable, and where it seemed impossible not to participate in it were I to stick around, I fled to the

hills. Or rather, to the West. I aimed to live as different a life as I could from the one I saw destroying the natural world—to have as little to do as possible with the oppression caused by the western way of life. I left my family of origin and every community of people I'd been part of, and headed to a place where I'd felt strangely at home on several previous visits with my traveling college program: a Native American reservation where I knew no one and no one knew me before my arrival. I felt called by the land, and so certain of this call that I had zero doubt about my path, and even managed to allay my parents' concerns about it too (with the help of a sometime-counselor who could also tell that this was a place I needed to go).

What awaited me was a year-and-a-half's intimate daily relationship with a remote canyon in northern Arizona, where I found myself in a very close "unintentional community" (the staff, clients, and families associated with a residential center

for developmentally disabled tribal members, where I volunteered and worked full-time). I then followed another unmistakable call—this time, also, not to any known group of people, but to a path of learning about growing food organically. This brought me first into another unintentional community in California and soon enough into an actual intentional community in Oregon—not because I was consciously looking for community (as I saw it, I was looking, foremost, to redeem my relationship to the earth) but because the kind of educational opportunities I was looking for, and the food-growing methods I was interested in, naturally lend themselves to community and in many ways are impossible without it.

For the majority of my 20s I slept outside or in a tent in all but the most inclement weather, bought almost nothing new, avoided getting into (let alone owning or driving) cars (and of course, air travel was out of the question), boycotted electronic entertainment and computers, avoided animal products and processed or chemically-grown foods. As I developed intimate relationships with the pieces of land on which I lived (always in some form of community), that land relationship was always the primary, most deeply felt glue that kept me there, rather than the human relationships (although those human relationships certainly impacted how long I wanted to

stay or how quickly I wanted to leave).

As a result I was spared some of the roller-coaster rides that fixation on other people can cause; the land proved a much more dependable companion than most humans I'd known (even myself). And at the same time it is hard not to look at the path I chose and wonder if it was escapist, rather than constructive. Is it socially responsible to simply opt out of a socially destructive system, focusing mostly on one's own life and those in one's immediate small orbit? (To be fair, I spent almost all of those years in communities with an educational mission—we drew people into the orbit of what we were doing, hoping to affect the wider society through these efforts, even if some of us rarely stepped off the land we were stewarding.)

The fact that I could find a situation in which to live so intimately with the land (both in the gardens where I worked most of my waking hours, and in the surrounding woods), with little previous training for that, and few serious economic fears (because I'd never had to confront them before), was undoubtedly a product of privilege that many don't have. Middle-class white people can embrace voluntary poverty with relatively little risk (or at least relatively little perceived risk) and with minimal obstacles to being received into back-to-the-land experiments.

People with less privilege often don't

have the luxury of being “downwardly mobile” with seemingly so little to fear—nor the privilege of being welcomed onto 40- or 80-acre land trusts in which that ecocidal civilization is kept, seemingly, so far at bay.

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Defining one's success in life through measures of ecological righteousness and/or land relationships, rather than strength of human relationships, can have its pitfalls. In fact, it can set one up for failure.

For example, to take one primary area of eco-responsibility and land-relationship whose challenges and ironies are reflective of many others': I found that no matter how much I adjusted my diet to become more aligned with ecological responsibility, I always came up short. I always failed at the same time I succeeded. Here are varying degrees of unacceptability as far as the earth is concerned, the majority of which I tried:

- A conventional American diet, based on factory-farmed animal products, chemically-grown food, excessive processing and packaging: clearly unacceptable.

- A vegetarian diet which nevertheless includes non-organically-grown or excessively processed or packaged foods: eventually, not acceptable either.

Is it socially responsible to simply opt out of a socially destructive system?



- A diet which excludes all of the above but still includes non-local and non-seasonal foods (like organic bananas, out-of-season tomatoes from Mexico): still not good enough, after trying it a while.

- A diet which excludes all of the above but still relies on purchasing some foods rather than growing them oneself: still pretty lame, from a certain perspective.

- An almost entirely self-sufficient lifestyle, food-wise, growing 95 percent of the community's own food on its own land—but using fossil fuels: uggh!

- Growing all of one's food using only animal and human power: not only extremely demanding, but exploitive of animals and destructive of native ecosystems.

- Growing all of one's food through only our own human labor and the most eco-friendly techniques: why not eat native foods, instead of introduced species that don't belong on this land?

- Cultivating native species exclusively:

We worked the land dawn to dusk, seeking to be welcomed back into its arms.

what disruption are we still causing?

- Wildcrafting exclusively: how are we impacting other species that may be depending on the food we're harvesting?

- Becoming breatharian: have we just wasted all the resources that went into keeping us alive thus far?

Caught in this trap (the trap of being alive at this point in history), none of us can escape doing something wrong, no matter how much we try to do it right. I found myself never quite living up to my own standards, and perceiving most others as living up to them even less than I was.

This was not a formula for "sustainable" community. It is impossible to love or fully accept others when one does not love or fully accept oneself, and vice versa. Basing self-acceptance on full re-attunement to the land (within an impossible situation where our entire world is so far from a balanced human-land relationship, and native foods themselves are in such short supply) is a recipe for misery and disconnection.

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We (or at least I) worked the land, dawn to dusk, seeking to be welcomed back into its arms. I felt at home in the gardens, in the woods, by the creek, among the birds and other wildlife. I eschewed consumer society and most of

what passes for western civilization, for as long as I could. I was sometimes, even often, disappointed that others in my communities were not such gardening maniacs—and yet I also relished the close relationship I developed with the land by being able to hear its voice above all others, by being able to relate to it one-on-one rather than always mediated by human chit-chat.

But what we avoid tends to catch up to us. Unexamined and undealt-with personal and interpersonal patterns within my communities sometimes cast a pall over the work I'd felt otherwise so dedicated to—and caused what had seemed like a secure, lifetime "home" to become a place I knew I needed to get away from. What's more, my fantasy of never aging or tiring physically of this kind of work proved just that. What used to be joyful and easy—or motivating even when it was challenging—became a lot more difficult as my body stopped cooperating as much. Not only had I been privileged by my economic and racial background during those years in the woods escaping the American way of life and trying to model a different one, but by my youth and freedom from health problems or injury.

I gradually adapted to new circumstances precipitated by an injury, replacing gardening (after a hiatus while I healed) with an increased focus on birding, which had already become a big part of my life, and by building on an earlier focus on native plants. I became more of a naturalist than a gardener. In nature centers, as I had in gardens, I found a realm in which to escape from civilization and its innumerable discontents. And as with gardening, this escape had a socially responsible aspect to it—instead of teaching gardening and growing food for my community, I was now leading nature walks and teaching people about birdsong.

But did I ever tune into the people who'd been gardening apprentices or interns with me, or who'd attended my nature walks or classes, as much as I was tuning into the garden, the land, the plants, the birds? Probably not. I felt my primary allegiance to the natural world, which I was sharing because others were interested. But at the the end of the day, I felt more connected to it than to them.



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The first clearcuts came as a shock. When I arrived in Oregon at my first intentional community, the approach was through a half mile of magical, wooded gravel drive, with logging roads branching off of it into similarly magical forest. (At least these were magical by my standards: I'd never lived in the Pacific Northwest before. They were definitely not old growth; however, a mixed, multi-story forest of any kind held magic for me.) During my time living there (almost six years, spread over an 11-year period) various bits of surrounding forest were chipped away at, but nothing on the immediate periphery. The hike around the watershed became a little less pleasant, but it was mostly still through lush forest, as was our path to the outside world.

A few years after my departure, on a return visit after the (human-associated) wounds leading me to separate from that community had healed for me, I experienced a fresh wound: that magical forest through which one used to travel to get to our remote ecotopia was leveled. This was not how the world was supposed to work. It was a tragedy, an unbelievable affront, an attack on the sacred. It was, of course, also business as usual in industrial forestry. Within a few years, the trees along the quarter-mile-long eastern boundary of the property were also leveled—a shock that awaited me on another visit. Several more clearcuts, on the borders or nearby, were to come in subsequent years.

Likewise, my new community, which had watched the seemingly endless woods on its own eastern border come down before I moved there, witnessed the felling of the woods on the opposite border (beyond its own recovering former clearcut, leveled by the previous owners), making the community's own, 12-year-old trees in the foreground a mighty forest by comparison. These clearcuts too were shocks; they seemed like crimes against nature on so many levels. Again, they were nothing unusual in western Oregon. It was their proximity, affecting forests that we loved, that made the wound so personal for us watching those trees fall.

And yet, land recovers. It will take hun-



dreds of years for an ecosystem to achieve old-growth status again—or decades to achieve aged second- or third-growth status again. Some qualities and species may be lost forever. But healing will happen, and does, both for the land and for ourselves, when it's allowed to. It can even be easy to forget the wounding, the inevitability of more of the same, and the cumulative effect of this kind of activity taking place all over the world, every second of every day. It can be easy to escape back into our little ecotopias, trying to get right with the land, trying to change the world one new resident, a half-dozen new garden apprentices, or a dozen new permaculture students at a time.

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Because being in the natural world can help us to forget previous wounding at the hands of people—to notice instead the forces of regeneration that take over in the absence of continued human assault—a deep bonding with the land can be an effective escape from suffering, both internal and external. We can witness the perfection and beauty of a world left to its own devices, not corralled or stomped out by our civilization. We can get glimpses of the much more intact world that our ancestors evolved in, and which may exist in the future, assuming it survives our own extinction or whatever alternative path

Deep bonding with the land can provide escape from suffering, both internal and external.

our species takes.

If we have sufficient privilege and material security, we can immerse ourselves in activities that saturate our consciousness with “nature” (or what we perceive as nature), and push out all those human tragedies we can't control. We need to be able to ignore the suffering of our fellow humans (at least to some extent) to focus intently on birds, for example—and by focusing intently on birds, we can be sufficiently captivated by another life form that our own apparently deeply flawed species begins to seem less important, especially since it may be beyond redemption anyway. Sufficient personal comfort and security—privilege—makes this possible.

What I've just described is the path that I, too, was on just a few years ago, despite “voluntary poverty” and a relatively rustic lifestyle. I was able to escape human misery by “finding religion” in the natural world and on the land. And I received



support for this (at least moral support, since all of my nature-guiding was volunteer) from others who, for the most part, were also insulated enough from wider social problems that they could fill their Sunday mornings with wanders around a local nature sanctuary, where the world made some kind of sense and retained some kind of beauty, amidst the assault on sense and the senses that mostly surrounds us in 21st century America.

As cars whizzed by on the interstate a mile away (cars like those that had brought most of us to this nature sanctuary), and trucks rumbled by spewing diesel exhaust (trucks like those that supplied all of us with much of what we depended on in our daily lives), we listened for bird songs and calls and delighted in identifying them all, while traveling at a tiny fraction of the speed of those vehicles on the highway, focusing on the other-than-human rather than the human, looking for redemption and escape from a more recently emerged world (our present civilization) of which we, like it or not, but often wanting to deny it, were a part.

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Imagine a nonstop clearcutting operation—chainsaws running all the time. Imagine a television that is on 24 hours a day. Imagine a high-pitched burglar alarm which one cannot turn off. Imagine having any of these suddenly imposed

on a world that used to be filled with the sounds of birds, water flowing over rocks, trees swaying and creaking, whispers on the wind, and quiet. Imagine feeling as if one's naiveté and stupidity caused this unfortunate change inside one's head. Imagine being unsure if one has been abused by the medical system, taken for a ride for profit, or instead is a deserving victim of his own tendency to trust too much, suspending critical thinking in times of fear. Then throw all the thoughts and analysis out the window, and what remains is this: some wounds do not heal. Some loss cannot be recovered. Some downhill slides cannot be stopped. Or at least that's how it can seem from within the surgically-induced tinnitus, when one has failed to find an effective remedy, at least on the physical plane.

Until three years ago, my understanding of human suffering was severely limited by rarely having experienced it in a serious way. And those experiences which had been especially difficult, which had temporarily sapped my will to live if things were to keep on this way, always resolved into a solution that relieved either (in a few cases) the physical pain or (in others) the emotional pain. The change that happened three years ago, however, has apparently permanently altered the sense I held most dear—hearing—and my relationship to the world moment-to-moment. The resultant emotions/sensations have included overwhelm,

disorientation, depression, fatigue, anger, desperation, and despair.

All of which, I recognize, I was previously spared by privilege—the privilege of avoiding the kind of misfortune that many people all over the world come to expect, through earlier encounters with it—encounters that seem almost inevitable.

As I've mentioned before in these pages, no longer can I bliss out to birdsong. No longer can I experience quiet, or anything at all that is not accompanied by this one sensory channel that seems very "off." On a physical plane, the idea/sense that "all is right with the world" no longer comes to me—not when I'm alone, anyway. The place I had found the most refuge, the most healing, the most escape from the multitude of things that could overwhelm and depress anyone on this planet at this time—the land—is no longer a place I can lose myself and forget about all problems. Instead, it never lets me forget the problems.

And maybe, at last, that's as it should be. Because maybe the idea of escaping to an ecotopian or intact natural world, and thus avoiding the reality of human suffering (my own or anyone else's) was doomed to collapse of its own weight after all.

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And maybe I've been seeing birds and the meaning to be derived from their presence in our lives through rose-colored binoculars too. The natural world is not a world apart from human problems. The natural world is **beset** by human problems. It can be easy to forget, while observing a beautiful species and almost wanting to **be** it, that it may be having a more challenging time dealing with modern civilization than we out-of-place nature-lovers are. We may be blissing out at the escape these birds are providing to us while, at that same time, they are in distress, or will be in the near future. Their nerves may be frayed by the modern world as much as ours are by tinnitus or whatever else plagues us. Just as it's easy to be absorbed by a fantasy happening on a movie screen (created by actors who may in fact be deeply troubled off-screen), it's easy to admire a migrant bird's plumage without thinking about the fact that

its winter habitat may have just been destroyed to raise more cattle for export.

So I experience things differently now. I no longer imagine that, despite what the ecological literature tells us, all is well in the natural world—something my senses would often suggest to me on the basis of the relatively intact ecosystems I was able to put myself into contact with.

Instead, I imagine that, in the absence of the silence I can no longer experience, I am hearing the cry of the earth all the time. I can sense that a relationship with the land on the basis of our shared woundedness could be just as powerful as one based on blissed-out “feeling good” in each other’s presence—but I know it will be a long process to integrate what still seems like trauma within the landscape of my own body, and to make peace with it while making peace with the countless traumas affecting our fellow travelers on earth.

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So what, again, is the upside of all this? Other than perhaps a more mature relationship to the land and all the biodiverse suffering it is holding?

After a certain amount of hanging on for life, and stumbling around, I’ve recognized that I can still find redemption and escape of sorts—but for me, it is no longer as a “blissed out nature-lover.”

It requires surrendering: setting aside my attempts to get perfectly attuned to the land, which have proved futile—as well as my attempts to solve my hearing-related trauma, which have also proved futile so far, at least on a physical level.

My own apparently insoluble problems have become boring. Instead, I’ve become fascinated by *other people’s* problems, and by other people’s needs, and by opportunities to help other people. I’ve recognized that my initial response to trauma—to turn inward and try to nurse my wounds—is exactly the wrong direction to go. Even in my most land-focused phases, I was always nurtured by a sense of social relevance (after all, we were researching, educating, and even producing publications about living more in balance with the earth and one another, at the same time that

we were living in community together). With less positive reinforcement coming from transcendently beautiful birdsong, I am no longer attracted to maintaining fierce independence from the roller-coaster world of close, emotionally vulnerable human relationships. Human connection seems to be what I need, the only thing that can truly bring me out of that not-so-happy inner experience described earlier. And fortunately, it is available.

What’s more, I find that my consciousness shifts, more and more easily, from myself to others when I put myself in their presence. I find that I get gratification from *their* experience of a walk through the woods, a beautiful sunset, an experience of healing within the natural world—or the prospect of *their* finding deep connection with a piece of land. And I am aware, to a degree I think I never truly was before, that *everyone* experiences formidable challenges in their lives, that adversity is a universal human condition, and that there is no escape. In fact, the only “escape” seems to be recognizing there is no escape, and embracing the universality (rather than isolation) of what we experience.

I no longer am constantly dissatisfied with whatever choices I (or, by extension, anyone else) has made in relation to diet or any of the million other areas where we modern civilized humans don’t

have a “perfect” choice. I’ve stopped resisting the reality that maybe we *can’t* do it right. Instead, maybe we are here partly just to experience the irony and the mystery of this time on earth, and respond as best we can in somewhat impossible circumstances.

And because I’ve experienced misfortune firsthand that is uninvited, seemingly not deserved (but it is ever?), or maybe karmically determined (but who knows?), I finally understand and am no longer inclined to deny misfortune, or to look away when I see it in the outside world, in others’ lives. Instead, I find that my tendency to judgment has greatly abated (except when triggered by presidential speeches), and my capacity for acceptance greatly expanded. And not only acceptance, but love. I find myself feeling in love with a great many people in my life—in ways more dependable than romantic love would be. Maybe it’s because we’re all part of the same elephant. 🐘

Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES. Numerous of his previous articles have touched on some of these topics, hopefully each from a slightly different angle—including “More Sustainable Than Thou” (#115), “How Ecology Led Me to Community” (#143), “Confessions of a Fallen Eco-Warrior” (#161), “Climate Crisis, Dystopia, and Community” (#174), “An Evolution in Community” (#181), and others.



Blind Monks Examining an Elephant, by Itcho Hanabusa (public domain, via Wikipedia)

What Can We Learn from the Amish?

By Michael McClellan



Photos by Michael McClellan

Horse Progress Days is an annual event held around the Fourth of July, rotating between Amish settlements in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. Competitions in plowing, haying, and other farm activities use draft-power exclusively.

For most people throughout human history, community and land were inseparable. From the earliest hunters and gatherers, people banded together in small groups for mutual support. Even the Creation story of many religions has a Creator making man and woman together—the first community—and placing them in a garden. With the family unit, the community grew to include others to form tribes and as time progressed, to form cultures and nations. For the early Christian hermits living in the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, isolation was normally only temporary as the hermits still came together in community every week to worship, break bread, and commune. In fact, the very words “communion” and “community” are clearly related—coming together as a community to share. Truly, the human individual has never been alone and was never really meant to be alone.

Since man and woman first began to cultivate the soil in Mesopotamia, a strong bond with specific plots of land developed as farming enabled those small communities to settle down and stop moving in search of game and wild food. With the domestication of animals and plants, communities could stay in place for generations. Over millennia, this stability led to the rise of civilization as we know it. As the earth yielded up sustenance to those working its soil, communities found themselves inseparably bonded with their land. As the Albanian saying expresses it, “Better to eat

dirt at home than honey abroad.”

Since the fourth century, various monastic communities sprang up across the Middle East and Europe. In 19th century America, other groups attempted a similar separation from society, such as the Shakers in various states, the Amana Colonies in Iowa, and Amish and Mennonite communities, Hutterites, and the modern Bruderhof Communities, the latter of which are intentional communities often based in cities. In Russia, the Old Believers fled to Siberia and other rural areas and during the Communist period they fled the Soviet Union to America where they continued their isolated life, as did several Orthodox Jewish communities that settled

mainly in New York.

In the modern world that has arisen in the 20th and 21st centuries, this bond with the land has been severely weakened in many of our societies. With urbanization and industrialization, people left the land for the cities, often moving to suit the demands of work, but still tried to maintain some connection to the land through their yards, gardens, and flowerpots. Appalachian farmers and southern Blacks who moved to northern industrial areas tried to preserve this connection through their music and literature. For many, this lost connection was felt clearly and painfully and could only be healed by moving back to the land.

This void in the modern human psyche that resulted from losing connection to the land seeks to be filled today through walks in the park, a hike in the woods, some indoor plants or flowers on the balcony, or the agrotourism that allows people to pick their own fruits and berries, do “internships” on farms, pet some gentle livestock, or even visit a farmers’ market so they can know people who still till the soil and grow the food they eat. People today yearn for that connection to the land of which modern civilization has too often robbed them. Indeed, there is often a spiritual emptiness that can be filled only through contact with the soil.

Intentional communities often try to

find that connection by returning to the land. This may be done with larger lots for houses in a low-density, planned community, by owning farms in a common area so personal connections can be maintained, or even by living in common on a larger tract and sharing the work. Villages in Europe usually followed the model of people living close together in community and then going out to their farms to work, returning to the village at night. Perhaps the best example of intentional communities that have consciously chosen to build their common life around the land are the Amish and Mennonite communities.

David Kline is a noted writer on sustainable and organic farming, draft-powered agriculture, beekeeping, and the vital connection of land and community. He is also an Amish bishop who lives in the lush, rolling farmland of central Ohio, farms with horses, and publishes a quarterly magazine, *Farming—People, Land, Community*. To explore this issue more deeply, I traveled to Ohio’s Amish Country to discuss the question of community and land.

On a chilly May morning, as the wood stove crackled and a team of horses rested outside, I sat across the simple table from the elderly, bespectacled man whose picture I had never seen in spite of reading hundreds of articles and books he had authored (Amish modesty precludes portraiture). His kind eyes and gentle smile bespoke the faith of his peace-and-nonviolence community as we settled in for a chat that lasted well over two hours.

Community, according to Kline, is vital to Amish life. I asked Mr. Kline if it is possible to be Amish alone, without community. “No,” he said, “we are like herding animals in that we need support from each other. If you light a candlestick, it does not make any noise but just shines its light out. But if you take it outside, the wind can blow it out so it needs protection, a globe to protect the light. That’s where we are as a community, as brothers and sisters, we are the globe for each other that keeps that light from being snuffed out.” Kline also recalled how he and his son were once plowing with teams of horses. “We stopped up on the hill to rest the teams, and we counted 15 other teams plowing in the neighborhood. I knew that if we had some misfortune, all those teams would unhitch and come to our help. It’s not a controlling community at all, but a passive one that will always be there for you.”

I asked Mr. Kline if it is possible to be Amish in an urban setting, but he was very clear that it is not. The Amish, he said, live only on farms and in villages, but never in cities. Every Amish home has a garden and raises at least part of their food so as never to lose their connection to the land. According to Kline, “All Amish are still



Virtually every Amish family, even those living in town, keeps a garden—important not just for the food it produces, but for the connection it helps maintain to the land and the farming lifestyle. This farm is at an Amish homestead near Sugarcreek, Ohio, the largest Amish settlement in the world.

I asked Mr. Kline if it is possible to be Amish alone, without community—or to be Amish in an urban setting, rather than on a farm or in a village. “No,” he said.

part of the agriculture community, such as making farm machinery, the horse economy, etc. If we lose our agricultural base, we lose a lot more than just agriculture. Even our seasonal Scriptures are in tune with agriculture. We are so rooted to the land and I see it very much as part of our spirituality.”

The attraction of the city, however, can be very tempting, especially for young Amish who are tempted by such modern

Farming is critical to the Amish way of life, allowing them to live out their faith by reinforcing their values.

accoutrements as computers, cell phones, cars, and other forms of technology. Like the ancient Egyptian hermits, though, the Amish will do business in the city, buying and selling, but only on occasion and only for the minimum time needed and then leave. Much of the homesteading literature makes a similar point that while it is good to be outside the city, it is also good to be close enough to one that you can do business there. For many members of intentional communities today, that may mean close enough to commute to a day job, while trying to spend as much time in community as possible.

So the consensus is that regaining that connection to the land requires leaving the city for a rural area or a village, but staying close enough to the city to do business as necessary for economic survival. After all, even the off-grid, homesteading, small-scale farmer usually needs to sell his or her wares at an urban farmers’ market.

However, the desire of the Amish to keep their communities small means

they often have to split their districts and send people off to start farms in other areas. Amish areas tend to appreciate in value very quickly due to the care they give their land, the tourism that develops around them, and the general appreciation of farmland. These new groups will often move far away in search of cheaper land, a factor that has contributed greatly to the growth of Amish communities in Kentucky and Tennessee, as land in Pennsylvania and Ohio gets priced out of the reach of young Amish. Analogous challenges confront many intentional communities and only strong communities can manage to succeed in this situation.

Farming is critical to the Amish way of life. The agrarian lifestyle is a deliberate choice they believe allows them to live out their faith by reinforcing their values and choices. According to Kline, “Amish farmers always sold on the general economy. Getting into private enterprise and manufacturing brought wealth, whereas with farming you did not get wealthy.

Community is very important in Amish life. Church services are held every other Sunday with alternate Sundays spent visiting friends and family. Here, three young Amish men relax in a field at an Amish gathering. Almost no Amish willingly permit photos of faces, in the interest of humility.



Agrarian Amish never got wealthy, but they had a good life. My father would always say, 'Farming is such a good life. When you sell, you take what they pay you; when you buy, you pay what they ask you. You have no real bargaining power. It's such a nice Christian life!'

Reflecting further on their choice to farm with horses and not tractors, Kline said, "We try to limit wealth. Farming with horses does that. Agriculture is very visible, everyone can see what you do. With manufacturing, much of it is invisible. It's inside, the technology is invisible, people do not see what you do and it's easy to get wealthy. With agriculture, everyone can see your mistakes."

Simply returning to the land, however, is not enough. The choice of living on the land is normally coupled with a desire to simplify one's life and a conscious effort to reject consumerism. While this may start out as an attempt to save money, many soon realize it is much more than that; it is not just about regaining a physical connection to the land, but also that lost spiritual and emotional connection to the land. Again, the Amish have much to offer in their collective wisdom on this topic as they initially separated themselves from the rest of society because of the changing technology of the Industrial Revolution.

"With consumerism, you have to keep it on a leash," said Mr. Kline. "That's why we have these Ordnungs (rules). I hardly ever go into a big box store, but when I do it's amazing how many aisles I don't have to walk down because of this. We have a dress code for the men—one suit—so on Sunday morning, I do not have to make a decision. I have one suit, one shirt, one hat, one pair of shoes—it's liberating! As far as simplicity, it really helps." I remember hearing a Russian Orthodox monk in Israel once say the same thing; "One of the nice things about being a monk is you never have to worry about what to wear!"

Related to simplicity is the concept of "enough." In this, the Amish communities are very serious about not being a slave to wealth or letting the love of money dominate their lives. As one such example of how Amish economy functions, Mr. Kline related the following

Neither riches nor poverty— definitely a radical philosophy in today's world of the "free market," "unbridled capitalism," "greed is good" society.

story about buying strawberries.

"Some years ago, we had a bad strawberry year. We had a variety that blighted and we had no strawberries. I went over to a farm in Kidron one day, about seven miles away, and I stopped at three places that were Swartzentrubers (a very conservative branch of the Amish community) that had signs for 'Strawberries for Sale.' I ordered them for the next week and when I went to pick them up, they charged me \$2.50 per quart when they could easily have charged me \$4 and I would not have blinked. Another time, I stopped at a place for blackberries and it was on a Saturday and they had marked the price down to \$2 because it was Saturday. I said I could not take them home that day because my wife was not ready to prepare them and that I would come back on Tuesday. One of the children said they will be \$2.50 then. The mother, who was inside the house but listening through the screen window, said 'No, they'll be \$2.' That impressed me that she would not interrupt them except to lower the price. They are just very happy with a decent price. The love of money really is the root of all evil. We do not want either riches or poverty."

Neither riches nor poverty—definitely a radical philosophy in today's world of the "free market," "unbridled capitalism," "greed is good" society.

So what can intentional communities learn from the example of our Amish neighbors? Three things: love the land, live simply, and avoid excess.

First, a connection to the land is vital. If at all possible, live on the land, work the land, care for the land, be one with the land, and grow at least part of your own food so you have a physical connection to it. Even if you live in town, regain that connection to the land by working

your little plot or pot of soil.

Second, our connection to the land must not be just local, but also global. Adopting simplicity and rejecting consumerism contribute to a better world in so many ways. We are part of the environment and part of global warming. Each of us has a moral duty to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Simplicity as a way of life helps restore the land, reduce waste, and contributes to a smaller carbon footprint.

Third, learn what is "enough." We do not need to compete with the Joneses or be somehow better than our neighbors. We do not need to store up in our bank accounts more than we truly need to get through life. Living off the land can certainly yield some abundance, but it is never extravagant. If modern society would put this concept into practice, gross income inequality would greatly decline and an improved quality of life would be possible for everyone.

People were meant to live in community and intentional communities are a great way to build that life around common interests and values. Restoring our connection to the land through such communities is regenerative and restoring for both body and soul. Touch the soil, live simply, and be satisfied with "enough." It's worked for the Amish for almost 300 years and it can work for us as well. 🍷

Michael McClellan is a retired Foreign Service Officer living on a small, organic farm in Kentucky where he keeps bees using treatment-free methods. He also works with the American University of Kurdistan to advance educational opportunity for young people in Iraq and the larger region. He has long had an interest in such intentional farming communities as the Amish, Shakers, and monasteries based in rural areas.

Dear Yurt, You're Not in Mongolia Anymore:

An Ancient Traditional Structure Plays a Role in a Community's Succession

By Laura McLeod and Meredith Rush-Inglis

We are two adult children of a small rural cooperative community, located among the lakes and hills of “cottage country” in eastern Ontario, Canada. Our almost 700 acres include mixed forest, old pasture, a creek, and one shore of a small lake, and several households have been living on this land since the early 1970s.

As the dozen or so members of the cooperative entered their senior years, they were pondering what future, if any, there might be for the community, and how they might work with their children, the “second generation,” to enable the place to continue. We shared a hope that the co-op could somehow evolve in ways that would work for all of us, while honouring and building on the decades of work and thought that had already gone into developing the community.

In the fall of 2015, the members invited their children, the “second generation,” to get together to discuss the subject. At that first meeting, several of us agreed that, as adults, we childhood friends needed a space on the property where we could be away from our parents’ homes. This would allow us to develop our own relationships with the land, with the community, and with each other as distinct from our family experience. Co-op members agreed with the idea, and offered to contribute financially towards making it happen.

Then our work began, using email, phone, and Skype to link a group of some 30 people in various places. We needed to identify ourselves as a group: who exactly were the “second generation”? Should we also include other friends? How involved did each of us, and our spouses or partners, want to be? What kind of space did we want to create for ourselves on the land? Once we addressed those questions, we worked with the co-op’s older members to ensure mutual agreement and bring the project to fruition.

Our choice of structure was a yurt. The traditional Mongolian yurt is full of symbolism, from the threshold that holds the spirit to the serpentine rope to bring fertility to the domed skylight that connects us to the universe. Yurts are the homes of nomadic herders who pack up every few months to take their herds to new land. Our yurt, a 300 square foot “Super Ger,” was made by a Mongolian family and imported by a Canadian company, Groovy Yurts. We loved everything about this perfect structure, not least of all its impermanence and the tiny footprint it leaves on the land. The co-op already has six permanent homes and we didn’t want to unnecessarily add to the infrastructure we would eventually be responsible for.

In early 2016, a number of us met on the land and checked out several possible sites, before the yurt and insulated platform (made by Groovy Yurts) arrived. Its assembly in July, near the creek on one of the co-op’s designated future home sites, was the occasion for a big reunion and celebration for the second generation, and a sign of hope for a continued legacy for the co-op members. We quickly furnished and fine-tuned

We loved everything about this perfect structure, not least of all its impermanence and the tiny footprint it leaves on the land.

the yurt's setup and made regular use of the space during its first season.

Through the yurt we found each other and our shared connection to this place. The project's success quickly led to a new proposal, one that would remove obstacles in the co-op's membership application process and allow the second generation to become full members in our own right. Now we're preparing to succeed our parents and take up the stewardship role they've sustained for 45 years.

Bumps on the Road

We had to deal with some unexpected bumps on the road to making the yurt our home base at the community. Initially, we were unaware that our municipality treats yurts as buildings, so we hadn't applied for a permit. We were soon made aware! This led us to work with our municipal staff and council to eventually find a fair and reasonable way to permit our alternative structure. In all, it took us two years to take this yurt from the seed of an idea to a built structure that is legitimate in the eyes of the local government. By sharing some details of this journey, we hope to help future community yurt-owners to reach this end state more quickly and easily.

In December 2016, just five months after raising our yurt, the co-op received a letter in the mail from the municipality detailing an order to comply with the Ontario Building Code by obtaining a building permit. This came as a complete surprise. We had been operating under the false assumption that yurts, being impermanent, would be considered tents and not subject to the Building Code. We quickly arranged to meet with the building inspector, who told us that the municipal bylaw required us to have a permit with a "seasonal dwelling" classification, at a cost of \$1875. We would also be fined \$300 for building without a permit, and have to provide an engineer's certification of the structural integrity of the platform and substructure.

Reluctantly, we filled out the permit application, submitted in early January 2017, and began obtaining estimates for the engineering work. With the order to comply extended until May to allow for the engineer's analysis, we used this time to become experts in Building Code and Bylaw deficiencies and to prepare a case for municipal policy change. We wrote to the building inspector outlining our arguments, but he responded that he had no power to change policy. We therefore arranged to make

a presentation to the elected municipal council, with the following goals:

1. Exemption from the \$300 fine for building without a permit
2. Relief from the \$1875 building permit fee based on our limited usage
3. Creation of a new building category based on a yurt's unique features

"Yurt-gate"

Local media attended the council meetings that considered our proposal. At the first one, in late April, councillors decided to request a staff report on yurts before making a decision. The subsequent report, prepared by the chief building official, strongly recommended that the original fee should stand. However, the mayor, who was sympathetic to our situation, moved to defer a decision on our request, and asked their own Building and Planning Departments to meet with the County Planning Department to look at different applications of yurts.

Our story became front page news with a newly-coined term: "Yurt-gate"! We stayed in contact with municipal staff as they prepared their comprehensive report to council, which made its decision in June. Our permit fee was



Photos courtesy of Laura McLeod

reduced by classifying the yurt as a free-standing deck, and we were charged a total of \$624, fine included.

After another inspection and a small variance in the substructure design, the yurt passed a final inspection in November 2017—two years from its conception and just shy of one year from receipt of the order to comply. The file was closed! We were ecstatic to remove that bright red building permit card from the side of our dear yurt, which now sits firmly planted and completely legitimate.

Making Change

The municipality continued to work to update policies so as to ensure fairness with small and unique projects such as yurts and provide incentive to apply for building permits. In June 2018, fees were reduced, with a minimum charge of \$80. Presenting the proposal at a public meeting, the same chief building official who, a year earlier, had argued against reducing our fee, used yurts as a justification for making the changes. “Yurts have been around for thousands of years but they’re completely different than a 1,500 square foot house with radiant heating and a two-car garage,” he said.

Our journey to get to this place of celebration was not easy. Change can be difficult when it requires you to think in

a different way, and it was very important that we remained respectful of our municipality’s policies while presenting our case. But by taking a calm and professional approach in navigating the bureaucratic mazes, we built new relationships with municipal staff, and had many fruitful discussions.

When dealing with our municipality, we came across three main challenges:

1. Municipalities are inconsistent in their handling of alternative structures. Some consider yurts as non-permanent structures that do not require building permits. However, some believe a yurt fits the Building Code definition of a structure, and thus requires a permit based on size and usage.

2. Yurts often do not fit neatly into any category under municipal building bylaws, and as a result may be subject to the same categories and fees as more expensive permanent structures.

3. As in other contexts, personalities can be challenging and pride can be an obstacle, especially with those in positions of authority. A building official may not appreciate having their authority challenged by citizens or elected officials!

In this process, we also opened some eyes to alternative ways of living. Staff and elected officials—not to mention

members of the public who read the local paper—learned about Mongolian culture and history, and how yurts have been beautifully designed, refined, and perfected over thousands of years of structural evolution. We’ve since been invited to showcase our yurt in a local “Homes and Gardens” tour, and we continue to look for opportunities to share our love of this ancient structure.

Blending a nomadic culture’s style of living into a settler culture, even a communal one, is both challenging and worthwhile. There is still much work to be done around sharing what yurts are and what benefits they can provide for people seeking alternative lifestyles. Your conviction and clarity of purpose will provide good fuel for inspired and considerate interactions with your municipality.

We’re very proud that our persistence in this journey toward permitting our yurt resulted in policy change. Perhaps people in other jurisdictions can use our example to help shift policies in more yurt-friendly and community-oriented directions. 🐦

Laura McLeod and Meredith Rush-Ingalls grew up at Lothlorien Rural Cooperative in Ompah, Ontario, Canada and are part of the second generation now preparing to steward the community and its land into the future.

Our persistence in this journey toward permitting our yurt resulted in policy change.



Community Land without Grants and Debt: Funding Ecovillage Neighborhoods with Community Shareholders

By Olivia R. Williams, Ph.D.

“Community control of land” sounds straightforward, but in practice it can be limited, fleeting, or difficult to achieve due to high property costs and the social, legal, and financial challenges of collectivizing property ownership. As a Ph.D. student studying the inequities of urban development, I was drawn to the community land trust (CLT) model for its roots in the Civil Rights Movement and the founders’ intentions to decommodify land and provide for community ownership of property in a permanent way. When I dove into my Ph.D. research on CLTs in 2014, I was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed about the CLT model’s potential. I imagined CLT neighbors sharing backyards, eating community meals, and making creative decisions about how to use vacant lots in their neighborhood.

Instead, when I asked homeowners in CLTs¹ about their CLT “community,” they said things like:

[O]nce people are in their house, given that most people who go into their houses are couples with children, working—almost by definition—low-income jobs, [...] I think the “community” part, once they’re in the house, is mostly in name.

And even when the CLT staff tried to foster community involvement, they had a hard time doing it. Another CLT homeowner said:

They tried to generate a homeowners’ kind of committee, and people just don’t want to do it [...] and I get it because the goal isn’t to be on the committee. It’s to have your home, and once you have your home you’re done and so why would you do something more?

What was going on? How did a model for community land ownership and local democracy become so diluted that “community” was hardly part of the process at all anymore?

In short, the CLT movement has gone the way of mainstream community development, from grassroots organizations to professionalized nonprofits dependent on external grants, where their funders are focused more on the production of housing than local democratic control of land.²

The CLT movement offers a warning to those of us seeking to change the way land is owned, developed, and stewarded at a large scale. It’s worth it for me to go into detail about how CLTs work and the shortcomings of the model’s design, in order to offer an alternative model funded by community shareholders called the community land cooperative (CLC).

Community Land Trusts and their Pitfalls

CLTs are nonprofit organizations that own land in perpetuity and keep prices affordable for the use of low-income people. CLTs can be used for commercial land, multi-family rental housing, housing cooperatives, urban farms, community centers, playgrounds, or any other use the board sees fit. Most often, however, CLTs are used as a vehicle for affordable homeownership, where the land is owned by the CLT and the house is owned by an individual. A qualifying individual (typically a moderately low-income person with a decent credit history) can purchase a CLT house at a price significantly below market value. The homebuyer gets a special mortgage for the house minus the land, and they pay a small lease fee to use the land under their house as if it were their own. The CLT stewards the property long-term,

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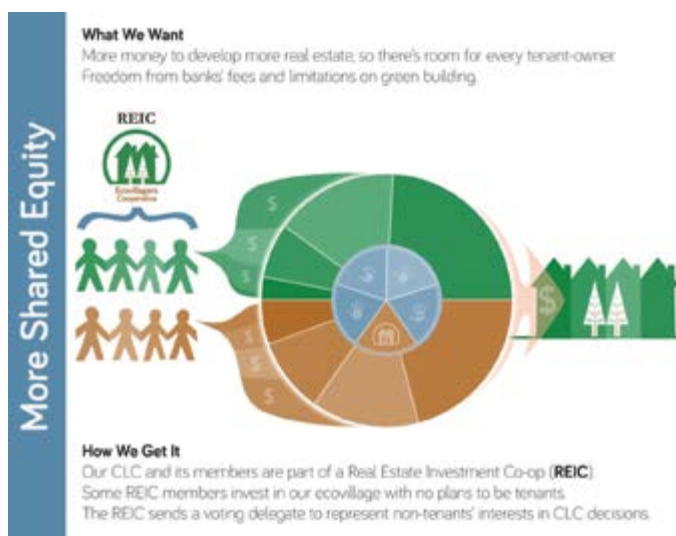
Figure 1: The Community Land Cooperative



Figure 2: Shared Equity



Figure 3: More Shared Equity



making sure that it stays in good condition—though the homeowner is responsible for most maintenance and repairs—and that the next homeowner qualifies for and understands the terms of CLT housing. When the homeowner is ready to sell to the next moderately low-income person, they get the equity they put in plus a portion (typically about 30 percent) of the increase in value of the home. CLTs therefore allow homeowners to build some equity while keeping property permanently affordable, according to the resale formula, which is enforced by the groundlease.

Most, if not all, CLTs face a common financial problem: the monthly lease fees (for the land) paid by CLT residents to a CLT organization are so modest—typically \$25-\$50 per month—that they cannot sustain the organization. Theoretically, there's a point at which the number of housing units would be enough to sustain the CLT on lease fees alone, but the number of houses required to sustain the organization (the "magic number" as some have called it) may be well into the thousands, and few CLTs have reached it. So if the CLT wants to sustain itself as a CLT, it has to bring in external grant money. Most grants available to CLTs are from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or foundations focused on affordable housing, so CLTs then must grow by continually acquiring land and adding housing to their portfolios to bring in the grant money.

The focus on grant-writing and housing development means that CLTs often become highly professionalized affordable housing organizations, with staff-focused operations and boards that prioritize the involvement of lawyers, housing developers, and sometimes public officials and funders. The increasingly competitive nature of most grants and the high price of land and housing development means that CLTs sometimes struggle to make ends meet. Most CLTs find they are better off supplementing their affordable housing projects with a more profitable side venture, so they also become a developer, lender, realtor, or other service provider to help pay for the CLT. This process leads the organization toward even greater professionalization, even if it helps ease the burden of the need for grant income.

CLTs, while arguably flawed, do important work in the context of rapidly rising land and housing values. They take property off the speculative market and hold it in perpetuity for low-income people. No developer can snatch up a plot of land once it is part of a CLT portfolio. No real estate giant can develop that corner into luxury condos. The neighborhood around a CLT parcel may become desirable, pricey, and gentrified, but the CLT-held land will remain affordable and accessible.

This function of CLTs is what gets organizers and activists excited about the model, and for good reason. The acceleration of land and housing costs has displaced countless individuals and communities, especially in the cities with the most employment opportunities. While rising land values are especially pronounced in urban markets, the pattern of land speculation is playing out everywhere and will continue to worsen, even in markets that seem affordable at the moment. Today's urban land discussions are a warning to everyone: there is a need to secure *both* urban and rural land for community control before the real estate giants snatch it up.

But creating widespread opportunities for genuine community control is not going to happen through CLTs. CLTs can take land

out of the speculative market and develop affordable housing, but their dependence on external institutional sources of funding make goals of community control, and even mixed-use development, difficult to achieve, since foundation and government funders tend to be most interested in encouraging CLTs to develop housing as quickly as possible. Financing the development of affordable commercial space, for example, can be more logistically challenging and financially risky than developing housing, so most CLTs don't even try. Similarly, keeping CLT land "undeveloped" for the use of community gardens is not a lucrative use of valuable property, so that idea is often nixed by CLT boards in favor of more housing.

Building affordable housing as prices rapidly rise is not *bad*, to be clear. But neighborhoods are so much more than housing. To radically change the way decisions are made about what we want our neighborhoods to be—and to create and maintain community-owned institutions and common amenities that are accessible—requires independence from external funders.³

The Promise of Community Land Cooperatives

For the reasons just described, Ecovillagers Alliance has been developing⁴ a model for collective land ownership based on equity, where all residents rent and own at the same time. At the neighborhood level, a community land cooperative (CLC) would buy parcels in a neighborhood (aiming to find them as close together as possible, adding parcels as they become available), and rent out residential and commercial space to members at democratically determined prices based on the cost of living. Every renter would buy one voting share to direct the CLC's development and management through Sociocratic governance.⁵ (See Figure 1.)

Members could also opt to buy equity shares to fund property acquisition and improvement. Equity shares are the engine that make this model run. Community-based equity means CLCs don't have to appease funders for grant money to buy property, and don't have to go into debt to finance property development either. (See Figure 2.)

Still, the CLC would need a lot of investors to be able to pay cash for property. For this reason, Ecovillagers Alliance proposes that all neighborhood-level CLCs within a region operate as subsidiaries of a regional cooperative that non-residents can also participate in by buying equity shares. The regional cooperative would operate as a real estate investment cooperative (REIC) that exclusively supports CLCs by providing development capital, incubation of new CLCs, administration of membership, accounting, legal services, etc., and networking opportunities between CLCs. Sociocratic decision-making would ensure that each CLC has direct representation to and from the REIC, and each CLC will maintain as much autonomy as possible over local matters. Having a regional body of support will furthermore help ensure the longevity of local efforts to cooperatively own land. (See Figure 3.)

Importantly, the REIC acts as an investment vehicle for people who want to pull their money out of ethically-questionable markets and invest in affordable, sustainable, democratic land stewardship. Rent from residents and commercial tenants in the CLCs will return dividends to the equity shareholders, tenant- and non-tenant-owners alike, providing an economic return on

Figure 4: Rent and Revenue

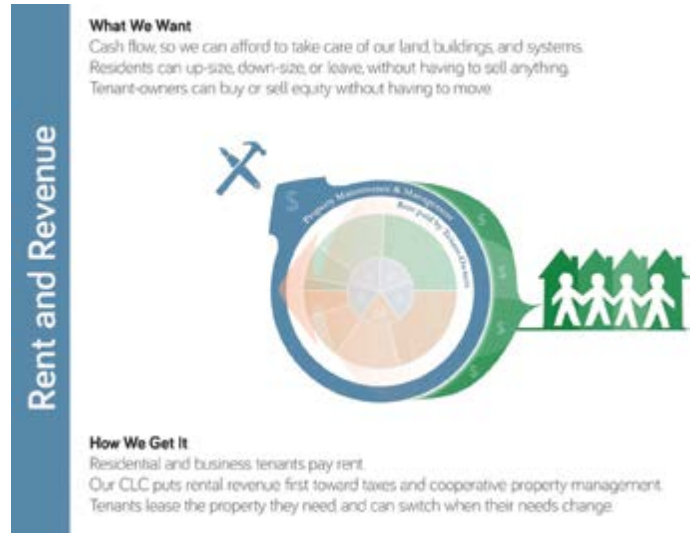


Figure 5: Dividends

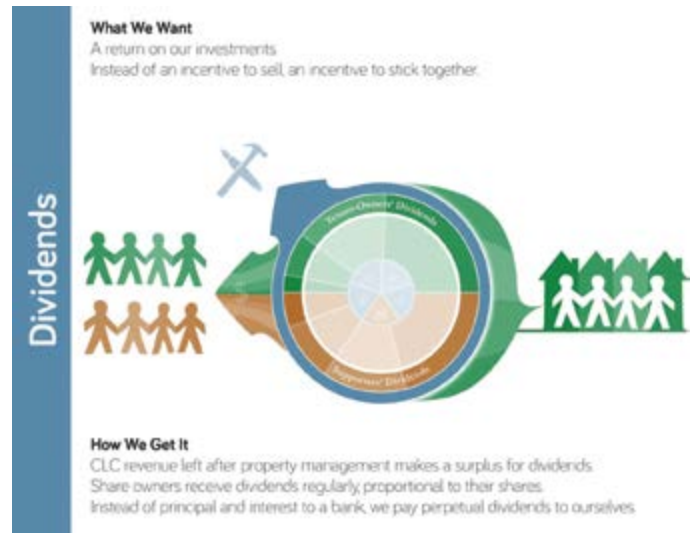


Figure 6: Principles



their investments. Unlike a publicly-traded corporation, the REIC disallows speculation and secondary-market trading of shares, determining their face value democratically, based on the cost of living and inflation, so an equity share will remain about as easy to buy in the future as it is today. Rent prices will be determined similarly, within each CLC based on local conditions, so that rents don't surpass community members' ability to afford them. Non-tenant shareholders will also be limited to one voting share each in the REIC, and their participation in local CLC decision-making will be limited by Sociocratic rules for representation.⁶ Therefore, capital will flow into neighborhood development from non-residing members, but control over local matters will remain predominantly local.

The rent coming in from residents and commercial tenants of a CLC will go first to maintenance and stewardship of the property (see Figure 4), and then dividends will be returned to equity shareholders, who may or may not live in the CLC (see Figure 5). A percentage of every shareholder's dividend will be retained for a "resilience fund" for each CLC to invest in projects like solar panels, rent subsidies for the lowest-income members, or related ideas to promote long-term sustainability, within parameters set by the REIC.

One of the reasons ecovillages, cooperative housing, and other collective land ownership efforts remain on the fringes in the US is that most of them rely on the capital of their founding occupants. When small groups of dedicated people pool their resources to buy a house or land, they can create inspiring islands of experimentation that show the rest of us what's possible. However, finding the capital in the first place and getting a group of people to commit to buying a house together can feel like a pipe dream. Even when efforts to collectively buy land are successful at first, they are at high risk for failure without a backstop. In the field of housing cooperatives, close to half of Limited Equity Cooperatives (LECs) eventually demutualize their assets (their owners decide to buy them out at market rate so they are no longer affordable),⁷ and group equity cooperatives (independent group-owned houses) often run into legal and financial hurdles that make organizational sustainability and independence challenging.

The model proposed by Ecovillagers Alliance, with neighborhood CLCs linked to a regional REIC hub, is an economically feasible way to keep community land affordable and community-owned without grant funding and bank loans. It also provides a mechanism to support the development of new community land-owning initiatives, so we don't have to reinvent the wheel every time. It's a cooperative approach to land ownership focused on justice and democratic control, protecting against tendencies we see in many organizations, as demonstrated by CLTs, to become narrowly focused, top-down, and professionalized.

Of course, no model itself is the end-all-be-all. Holding fast to our principles (listed in Figure 6) and keeping the *community* in "community land cooperative" will require the dedication of all members. Maintaining a culture of participation and collective support has to be an ongoing goal and practice of Ecovillagers, through social organizing, co-learning, inclusive leadership, and community-building activities, not unlike successful

political or labor organizing. Aside from the structural problems with the CLT model, a cultural problem is also apparent in the CLT movement: CLT staff, boards, and advocates have become, broadly, less interested in community organizing and more concerned with brick-and-mortar housing production.

Staying true to our goals to retrofit existing spaces for sustainable, community-owned, affordable, mixed-use, demographically diverse neighborhoods will be made easier by staying economically autonomous by funding development with community shareholders. The community land cooperative, supported by a regional real estate cooperative, offers a way forward. To learn more, visit our website at ecovillagers.org and pre-register for regular educational webinars about the model at www.ecovillagers.org/webinars. 🌱

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Olivia R. Williams received her Ph.D. in Geography in 2017 from Florida State University and writes on behalf of Ecovillagers Alliance (www.ecovillagers.org), the organizing and education initiative in support of Ecovillagers Cooperative.

1. This research comes out of a collaborative National Science Foundation Grant based on 124 interviews of a variety of people involved in eight CLTs in Minnesota. The CLTs I'm quoting from here were some of the least community-focused in our research. In my personal interactions with staff of dozens of CLTs across the US, I have seen a variety of ways CLTs have been successful in engaging residents in governance and community events. There is also a persistent group of CLT organizations and advocates who stay true to their values of community control despite the trends in the field. My purpose is not to lump all CLTs together, but to critique the structural problems in the CLT model that led to the lack of community focus in the instances I highlight here.

2. For a more detailed account of the loss of "community" in CLTs, see "W(h)ither the community in community land trusts?" by DeFilippis, Stromberg, and Williams in the August 2018 edition of the *Journal of Urban Affairs*.

3. For an enlightening selection of essays about the nonprofit-industrial complex, see INICTE!'s 2007 book, *The Revolution will not be Funded*.

4. As of this writing, the proposed model has been incorporated only in pieces. Legal details and pilot sites are in development for the first CLCs and the first regional Ecovillagers Real Estate Investment Cooperative to be incorporated in the Mid-Atlantic region of the US.

5. Sociocracy is a method for making democratic decisions through nested circles, which can scale based on the needs of the organization. First developed for Dutch corporations, it has been widely adopted by intentional communities.

6. Sociocracy's "double-linked circles" allow for cross representation between the REIC and its CLCs, such that CLC residents participate in regional REIC policy-making, and non-residents participate to a limited extent in local decisions.

7. This estimate comes a 2016 study by The Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB) called "Counting Limited-Equity Co-ops."

Preparing the Ground for an Innovative Farm Community —Orange County, New York

By Jack Hornickel, Jim Oldham, and Johanna Rosen

The first any of us spoke of Nemeth Farm was at a retirement party held at Jimmy's No. 43, a subterranean East Village foodie hang-out. The retiree was a long-time Union Square Greenmarket manager, and Morse Pitts, having sold his vegetables at Union Square for more than 30 years, was there for the sendoff.

At the time, Morse was in the midst of his own, long-desired, land conservation effort. Year after year, he had seen the industrial development creep up to his property in Hamptonburgh, Orange County, New York: millions of square feet converted here for a distribution center, graded and paved there for a medical products manufacturer, an iron foundry, a truck wash, another distribution center, and another. Morse's agricultural neighborhood was being swallowed by warehouses, droning through the night, with orange fluorescent parking lot lights disturbing the twilight.

The fact that Morse owned a farm in the first place was a happy accident. Growing up in suburban Long Island, his parents received notice one day that a 142-acre farm in New York's then rural Hudson Valley had been bequeathed to them by a scarcely known relative. Along with the land, century home, and historic carriage house came a levy of unpaid taxes. With a sardonic touch, the family named it "Windfall."

Their visits to the surprise farm began with weekend trips and eventually developed into year-round residency. None of the Pitts family were farmers. To cover the taxes, they variously rented the property to local dairymen and sold gravel extracted from its generous glacial deposit.

As Morse and his sisters reached adulthood, they moved from the farmhouse. Morse took employment as caretaker of the nearby Unitarian Meeting House.

But Morse always maintained a vegetable garden on the inherited property. The garden grew each year, incorporating greenhouses, tractors, more efficiency, and greater sophistication. Morse was joined by his sister Kathi, mother Gladys, and friend Barry. His first sale was a load of pumpkins to gourmet grocers Dean and DeLuca in 1980, and his business was born. Morse began selling vegetables as "Windfall Farms" at the Union Square Greenmarket in 1988.

Windfall Farms has always held high environmental standards, rejecting all use of pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers. In the early years, Morse marketed his produce as "organic." Once that term became regulated by the US Department of Agriculture,

Morse's agricultural neighborhood was being swallowed by warehouses.



Windfall Farms in center, with Nemeth Farm (to east) in background.

OCLT/LightHawk

Morse Pitts.

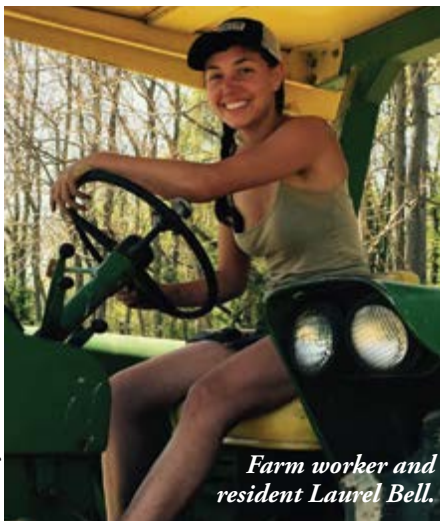


Darin Hinman



Windfall Farms' greenhouse.

Darin Hinman



Farm worker and resident Laurel Bell.

Courtesy of Johanna Rosen



Morse and supporters in planning session.

Chris Wayne

which grants certification with a certain tolerance for chemical applications, Windfall Farms abandoned the term and adopted “unconventionally grown” to describe its ethic of caring for health and environment.

Morse’s dedication to ecologically-conscious farming and his welcoming attitude gained the interest of countless farmhands over the years. The Gonzalez family, now in its third generation, arrived at Windfall 28 years ago after farming under intensive chemical application elsewhere, and continues to work there today. Some folks have come to learn Morse’s methods and gone on to launch their own farm businesses. Kira Kinney of Evolutionary Organics (New Paltz, New York), David Siegel of Muddy Farm (Stone Ridge, New York), Sue Lametta of Bramble Hill Farm (Unity, Maine), and Hubert McCabe of Fine Line Farm (Searsmont, Maine) are all Windfall Farms alumni. Currently, Zach Pickens of Farm Tournant and Bryan Quinn of One Nature, a native landscaping business, are building independent businesses onsite at Windfall.

The question for Morse, with bulldozers at his doorstep, has been whether this farm community, based on collaboration and mentorship, could continue beyond his lifetime. For help, he reached out to GrowNYC, Equity Trust, Orange County Land Trust (OCLT), and Scenic Hudson. With their support, he began working together with the farm employees, residents—including his sister Kathi—and fellow farmers to develop a plan that could maintain both commercial farming on the property and the cooperative community spirit among multiple farmers.

As is so often the case with family farms, the first challenges were to find a way for the several family members who co-owned the property to benefit from its value, and for Morse to obtain some money for retirement, yet still preserve the farm. The surest method would be to sell a conservation easement. This would prohibit future development on the land while generating funds to buy out the non-farming family members.

New York has a strong state-funded farmland protection program, and OCLT and Scenic Hudson were confident that an application for Windfall would be competitive. But a funding request needs local government backing and, in Hamptonburgh, where some view protected farmland as standing in the way of new tax revenues from in-

dustrial development, getting the required endorsement did not look easy. However, with strong backing from OCLT and neighbors, and the advocacy of supportive Councilors, in August 2014 the Town Board voted in favor. A successful application for state funding to purchase an easement on the farm followed and, in December 2016, after the land had been surveyed and appraised, and easement terms negotiated, Morse sold the development rights to OCLT, with 75 percent of the price paid by New York State, and Scenic Hudson providing the required 25 percent match. The payment was divided among the four Pitts siblings and their cousins, all heirs to the property, leaving Morse with a modest sum and sole ownership. More importantly, he and his allies had leveraged decades of conscientious farming and incidental community organizing to permanently protect his family farm from development.

Even with this important success, more work remained to realize Morse's vision for a farm where young farmers could easily access the land to build skills and a business in tandem, and gain equity in that business without the burden of a great land debt. The sale of development rights lowered the value of the land considerably, but the resulting price would still be too high for many farmers to afford. Also, if the land remained in private ownership, there is no guarantee that Morse's ethos of land-sharing would survive. What was needed was a novel land-ownership model designed for long-term affordability. The parties agreed that Equity Trust would seek funding to purchase Windfall Farms' land to establish such a model through shared ownership. Morse and his fellow farmers would retain ownership of the infrastructure, and access to the land, under a long-term ground lease. (See sidebar.)

In the thick of this major undertaking, with the ink barely dry on his own conservation easement, Morse was, frankly, much more concerned about his neighbor, David Nemeth.

How Shared Farm Ownership Works

Shared farm ownership is an arrangement where the land is taken off the market and held in trust by a nonprofit entity (in this case Equity Trust) which makes it available to farmers through long-term (often 99-year) ground leases. The lease allows farmers to purchase and own the existing buildings and build new infrastructure. The nonprofit has stewardship responsibilities, while the costs of upkeep, taxes, and insurance are the responsibility of the farmers. The ground lease requires commercial farming to ensure that the surrounding community continues to benefit from the food produced and the economic activity. Once situated on the land, multiple farmers can either cooperatively manage the land under a single lease or share the property under a series of separate leases. Either way, shared farm ownership is very compatible with the approach to mentoring and sharing of skills and equipment already established at Windfall and Nemeth Farms. When a farmer is ready to retire or relocate, they can sell their leasehold interest and the accompanying infrastructure to another farmer for its agricultural value.

By taking the real estate value out of the equation, farmland access is much more affordable for incoming farmers. Once on the land, farmers can reinvest more of their income back into their business or into retirement accounts, rather than paying interest on a large mortgage. This approach has roots in affordable housing, where, since the 1980s, community land trusts have used shared ownership and long-term ground leases very successfully to maintain affordability in both urban and rural communities.

—JH, JO, JR



Courtesy of Johanna Rosen

Farm worker and resident Darin Hinman.

The Organizations Supporting This Effort

Equity Trust is a small, national nonprofit organization dedicated to equitable and sustainable land use. For over 25 years it has promoted the protection of affordable working farms through model projects, innovative ownership structures, and financing. Equity Trust's Hudson Valley Farm Affordability Program provides technical assistance, grants, and bridge loans to farm protection projects designed to keep farmers on the land.

Role in partnership: Provided model ground leases and funding to establish the shared ownership farm. As title-holder, will negotiate leases and oversee future farmer-to-farmer transfers. Intends to serve as a bridge to an existing or new regional entity taking over ownership sometime after the ground lease relationship is established with a full contingent of farmers.

GrowNYC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that helps residents make New York City the most sustainable city in the world. GrowNYC operates Greenmarket farmers' markets, engages New Yorkers in recycling education, builds and maintains green spaces, and engages young people in hands-on education. Through its FARMroots program, GrowNYC offers business development technical assistance to Greenmarket farmers to ensure their long-term viability.

Role in partnership: Provides ongoing technical and legal assistance to Windfall Farms. Participated in the development of the easements and ground lease. Committed to helping identify and recruit new farm businesses to the land; supporting those businesses with technical assistance and help accessing markets; and partnering with Equity Trust and Windfall Farms in addressing zoning, building code, and land use issues faced by the farms.

Orange County Land Trust was formed in 1993 by a group of conservation-minded visionaries led by Louis V. Mills, OCLT's founder and first president, and Orange County's first County Executive. It works to protect and preserve scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of the county for future generations before they are lost to anticipated growth and development.

Role in partnership: Liaison with Orange County government, easement holder, responsible for long-term stewardship and enforcement of the terms of the easements.

Scenic Hudson helps communities preserve land and farms, and create parks where people enjoy the outdoors and the Hudson River. It brings together people, businesses, and government to protect the river and natural resources that support the valley's local economies. Started in 1963, Scenic Hudson is credited with launching the modern grassroots environmental movement. Today, its focus is on strengthening and maximizing benefits all can enjoy from the region's beautiful open spaces, working farms, and vibrant cities and town centers. Its Foodshed Conservation Plan creates a roadmap for protecting farms that supply fresh local food to NYC and the Hudson Valley.

Role in partnership: Participated in the development of the easements and provided, with OCLT, technical expertise and administrative oversight to complete the easement transactions. Provided funding for the conservation easements and is the organization that would take over easement stewardship and enforcement if OCLT were unable to continue in that role.

—JH, JO, JR



Back at that Greenmarket retirement party, in the dim hall of Jimmy's No. 43, Morse told Jack Hornickel, a staff attorney at GrowNYC, that he suspected his neighbor was in foreclosure. Someone had seen an article in the legal section of the local paper. Neither knew much about tax foreclosure, but they agreed to look into it together.

Morse and Jack met with David at his 72-acre farm to learn more. Under a light rainfall, Morse offered a personal loan to pay back taxes and recover the land from the County, which, David confirmed, had taken title. However, after further research, it became clear that David's window for redemption had closed and that the County government was already preparing to sell the property for industrial development—more farmland was about to be paved.

Indeed, David had observed land surveyors and real estate agents walking the property. Thus, the race was on to uncover what was proposed, how far along the project was, and what strategies might save the farm. Such a campaign would require the participation of Windfall Farms' employees and residents, nonprofit partners, and neighboring landowners. So, that team was mobilized. Not another warehouse; all were committed.

The first challenge came at a meeting of the Town Planning Board, where the site plan for development of Nemeth Farm was to be presented. The plan included 88,000 square feet of warehouse, with 42,000 square feet for future expansion, 20 tractor-trailer bays, a 420-foot rail dock, and parking for 85 employees. This facility would be constructed next to state-designated wetlands through which a paved industrial access roadway would be driven. It would receive conventionally-grown produce from the West Coast, to be washed, repackaged, and distributed to New York City. The project was everything that Windfall Farms stood against.

The local community again turned out in numbers, along with Morse, Kathi, and Windfall Farms employees. The farmers and neighbors raised many concerns: The hours of operation were a sham, argued a neighboring property owner; the truck traffic would be required to execute an impossible jack-knife on a sleepy town road, observed another. Surely the wetlands would flood with all the additional paved surfaces. "These same soils have supported my farm for decades!" Morse cried from the vestibule. The Planning Board listened respectfully and, fortunately, the developers never returned.

The second challenge was to propose a viable alternative. Morse and Jack reached out to Equity Trust, which agreed to expand the long-term plan for Windfall Farms to incorporate Nemeth Farm. With the prospect of additional acreage, and David's inventory of vintage tractors and mechanical expertise, the vision for multiple farm operations sharing land, skills, equipment, and other resources could be amplified. OCLT and Scenic Hudson were also eager to pursue the protection of these additional 72 acres. So over the next 18 months, all partners worked to make it happen.

It was agreed that, if a purchase could be negotiated, Equity Trust would buy the farm and enter into a ground lease with Windfall

Farms upon Scenic Hudson's purchase of an easement. OCLT would hold the easement and Windfall would manage the land in conjunction with David, who would be able to continue to farm the land he had lost through the foreclosure.

OCLT took the lead in negotiating with the County government, which agreed to sell the farm for conservation purposes at a less-than-market-value price. The nonprofit partners shared costs and responsibility for an appraisal, environmental review, title search, survey, and property inspections, and worked collectively to draft an easement and ground lease appropriate to the long-term vision. In August 2018, Equity Trust purchased Nemeth Farm from Orange County and Scenic Hudson simultaneously bought the agricultural conservation easement, a key element in making the transaction financially viable for all the partners. With counsel from GrowNYC, Windfall Farms acquired the existing buildings and executed a ground lease, ensuring land access for all farmers.

This multi-party effort has saved another farm from industrial development. With Nemeth Farm now secure under the shared ownership envisioned for Morse's property, the project partners are returning to that original effort, seeking funds to match those that Equity Trust has committed to complete the transfer of ownership of the Windfall property. They are simultaneously working to bring additional farmers onto the land and create cooperative management structures.

• • •

Windfall and Nemeth Farms comprise a protected corridor of 214 acres of productive farmland, woods, and sensitive wetlands, in an area facing intense pressure from development, just 50 miles from New York City. With four farm businesses on the land and, between them, more than 20 people employed, the farms are already making an important contribution to the community. Yet there is potential for so much more.

And more will develop, as the farmers—current and newly recruited—organize themselves on the land, and work with their nonprofit partners to create a

land plan, new leases, and cooperative structures. There will be challenges: How, for example, to maintain the openness and flexibility Morse has established, while formalizing what have been historically ad hoc, personal agreements? Yet already this project has demonstrated how organizations can help communities create new ways to hold, protect, and care for land that makes sustainable and collaborative farming possible. 🍁

Jack Hornickel, Esq. works as a Staff Attorney in the FARMroots program of the GrowNYC Greenmarkets, providing transactional and regulatory legal assistance to small farms. He holds a Juris Doctor and Master of Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School.

Jim Oldham has dedicated his professional life to organizations that aim to empower communities to build economic and social relationships that are both sustainable and just. He currently serves as Executive Director of Equity Trust, a position he has held since 2010.

Johanna Rosen works with Equity Trust's Farms for Farmers program, providing technical assistance to farmers and communities seeking to protect affordable working farms and provide secure land tenure. She holds a Master of Environmental Studies from the University of Pennsylvania with a Certificate in Land Preservation.



Hector Gonzalez.



The Gonzalez Family, packing squash blossoms.

Courtesy of Johanna Rosen

Courtesy of Johanna Rosen



Erik Hassert

COLLABORATIVE MAPPING IN FELIXSTOWE'S COMMUNITY NATURE RESERVE

By Dr. Adrian Cooper

In the small coastal town of Felixstowe, in the southeast of England, a Community Nature Reserve was started in May 2015 (see COMMUNITIES #175, Summer 2017, pages 64-65). The aim of our Community Nature Reserve is to try to stop the decline in local wildlife populations. We began with just an idea. Then, we attracted increasing numbers of active members. Today, we have 1,016 local people who have each devoted at least three square yards of their backyard gardens for wildlife-friendly features such as pollinator-friendly plants, ponds, hedgehog homes, insect hotels, and bird feeders. If you wanted to add together all those new, sustainable wildlife-friendly spaces, you'd have about 75 percent of a soccer field. And that's after only three years of working together!

Everything we do in Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve comes from decisions taken by our committee who respond directly to the suggestions of our members. That way, everyone feels they have an active role in driving our Community Nature Reserve forward. In April 2018, the idea was suggested to start our own Citizen Science Group. Within only a couple of weeks, we had almost 40 members. The main focus of our Citizen Science Group is to create our own online maps of local wildlife. We had never done any collaborative mapping before, but we realized that no one knows our local environment better than we do!

Among our group of Citizen Scientists, there were people who had done similar work at college and elsewhere. However, most people had never been a Citizen Scientist before. They simply liked the idea. To us, their enthusiasm and willingness to learn was good enough to count them among our number.

At our first Citizen Science meeting in April 2018, we explained to the audience that Citizen Science is simply a way for everyday people to get involved in the scientific investigation of their local environment. We then discussed among ourselves what our first project should be. The answer quickly came through loud and clear: *"We want to make a map of where local hedgehogs are found."*

To start the data gathering of locations for our online map, we used our Facebook page to invite local people to tell us where they saw any hedgehogs in our neighborhood during the first week of May 2018. Those locations came back to us within just a few days of us asking. We had 58 reported hedgehog locations from 58 of our community members! Not bad for a first mapping exercise. However, we had to be very careful in the wording given to this mapping project. We were therefore clear that we were not mapping the actual hedgehogs. Instead, we were mapping the reported sightings of local hedgehogs. But that's fine as a starter project.

The next stage in our collaborative mapping exercise was to translate those locations into our first online map. Unfortunately, online mapping software can be expensive. One of the features of Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve is that we have no money. In fact, we have never even had a bank account. But that's always been a conscious decision. Having no money means that we have always had to be creative and gregarious—and those are positive features for any community project. It also means that when other communities want to copy our ideas (and they're always welcome to do so) they never have to worry about getting hold of grants or big-time funding. For us, when we need to spend money, we simply rely on the kindness and creativity

The main key to success with this kind of community-building work is to communicate each stage in the process as clearly and accessibly as possible.



Photos courtesy of Dr. Adrian Cooper

of our community members. So, when it came to thinking about mapping software, we chose to use QGIS because it is free and open source. It's also easy to use, so it's easy to explain to our members. We described each stage of the mapping process in clear, simple English, using no technical jargon or buzz-words.

One of the great dangers of Citizen Science and collaborative online mapping is that so-called experts tend to take over, and everyday people can feel excluded. With us, that danger was front and center in our policy of communicating clearly to everyone. When we explained the mapping process, we did so in groups of no more than five members. That way, everyone felt able to ask questions in those small groups without feeling intimidated by a larger gathering. At each stage in these explanations, we also asked our members in those small groups if they felt happy with what was being described. Only when those members said they understood clearly, was the next stage in the process explained. At the end of that meeting, everyone agreed they

knew what we were doing.

We then completed our first online map for hedgehog sightings in central Felixstowe. A week later, we completed our final map for the whole of our local area, including some neighboring villages which we have agreed to regard as being within the Felixstowe area. We then uploaded our map and put it on our new Citizen Science Group website (at felixstowe-s-community-nature-reserve.webnode.com).

Everyone who was a part of this collaborative mapping exercise felt greatly encouraged that we were able to use our community to gather data and complete this mapping exercise. We also shared it on our Facebook page and Twitter, and received more encouraging comments. We also shared our online map with the Biodiversity Information Service for our county, and the UK's National Biodiversity Network. As a consequence, hundreds of people were able to see our work. Hopefully, they will feel inspired to do similar mapping activities in their communities.

One of the main features of collaborative online mapping is it creates a real sense of personal and community involvement in the environment being mapped. While most maps are produced by so-called experts who may never even visit the area being mapped, our collaborative maps serve to create a wonderful sense of community "ownership" of the project. All of us were involved at every stage in the process. Young children were able to participate in the project because all they had to do was share in the excitement when Mom and Dad saw a hedgehog in their backyard garden, or outside in the street. They then learned that their reported sighting was important for the mapping exercise as a whole. At the other end of the age scale, our senior citizens were also able to tell us, either verbally or through texting or online, if they had seen a hedgehog. In every way therefore, our collaborative mapping project was as inclusive as it could possibly be.

Having created our first online map together, morale among our Citizen Science Group was high. We felt encour-

One young member told us, “Suddenly, Math has become real to me, and I love it.”



aged that, as a team, we could gather data in this way, and share it in the way we wanted—through collaborative online mapping.

At our next meeting, some of our members asked if we could do some data analysis to support our map. We therefore decided to take a random sample of 50 members of the Community Nature Reserve, and asked them how many days during the first week in May 2018 they had laid out food and water for their local hedgehogs. We soon got our data back and created a simple bar chart on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. As with our mapping exercise, we explained what we were doing, and how we were doing it, to all members. In that way, everyone felt they had the opportunity to learn, and to share their questions and observations. As a consequence, both the map and our bar chart is an exercise in community building. All the data came from our members, and all the analysis was developed through group discussion.

Next, we wanted to try to convince other members of the Felixstowe com-

munity that laying out food and water for hedgehogs really is the best way to see these beautiful creatures in our backyard gardens. We therefore decided to create a correlation graph with a linear regression line. We began, as always, by explaining the process in small groups, and using a non-technical vocabulary. In doing so, we talked about correlation as simply “understanding the relationship” between feeding hedgehogs and seeing them in our backyard gardens. When everyone felt they understood the process, we took another random sample of 50 of our members and produced our correlation scatter plot with its linear regression line.

In this way, our Community Nature Reserve has shown that Citizen Science and collaborative online mapping is a great way to help build communities. If it works for us, it could work anywhere. The main key to success with this kind of community-building work is to communicate each stage in the process as clearly and accessibly as possible. Communicating in small groups is essential. Time spent at that basic level always

helps to build a good foundation for everything else which follows.

In future, our Citizen Science Group will repeat our collaborative online mapping exercise to see how the pattern of reported sightings for local hedgehogs changes. Hopefully, we will receive more reported sightings too!

We also want to do a lot more data analysis. Young members in particular have told us they like the way they can use Math in the real world and in the context of our community. As one young member told us, “Suddenly, Math has become real to me, and I love it.” Parents are also pleased to see such enthusiasm among their children for Math and the Computer Science of creating collaborative online maps. 🐣

Dr. Adrian Cooper worked as an Associate Research Fellow in the Department of Geography, London University between 1992 and 2013. His principal research interest is the public engagement with conservation spaces. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and a Consultant to the BBC TV.

Recipe for a Fruitful Meal-Share

By Rachel Lyons

“The need for community and connection is primal, as fundamental as the need for air, water, and food.”—Dean Ornish

For years, I wanted to share regular meals with friends, but dietary variances, scheduling difficulties, or a lack of commitment prevented a consistent meal-share from taking off. Then one day during a community-visioning meeting, Terrah, a single mom and my new neighbor, voiced her desire to eat with other families on a regular basis. Eureka! I practically shook her with excitement: Let’s do it! She agreed and proposed we start that week. My partner, Donovan, joined the endeavor, and a tasty collaboration ensued.

We three adults have taken turns cooking dinner for each other and for Terrah’s two-year-old, Wendell, three nights a week for several months, and it is beyond satisfying. We rotate dinner nights in each other’s homes, and the cook cleans up afterward. Often we bring our own dishes, silverware, and to-go containers. Here’s what has worked for us, what we’ve learned, and how we’ve benefited.

Meal-Share Ingredients:

Proximity—One thing that makes our meal-share easy is that we’re neighbors in a quasi-community of small, close-set houses on 25 acres of farmland. If we please, we can walk barefooted (and, in the case of the two-year-old, bare-assed) to each other’s homes. Driving through traffic, rain, or snow isn’t necessary. Adjusting to scheduling changes is simple. Returning each other’s borrowed mugs or to-go containers, or retrieving things we left behind, is a breeze. We also get the benefits of dinners “out” without incurring the financial, environmental, and transportation costs associated with commuting.

Commitment—This is probably the top ingredient for our success. Doing what we say we’ll do when we say we’ll do it builds trust and respect, and it just wouldn’t work any other way. We took a chance on each other, and it’s worked out. Now that we’re considering adding others, we reflect on what we know of a potential member’s ability to commit.

Flexibility—Having the freedom to swap days or change times if necessary makes our dinner-share easeful. We agreed from the beginning that if we didn’t feel like having company on the night we cook, we’d let everyone know. Conversely, if we want to simply take our food to go, that’s okay, too. When we have evening engagements on a shared dinner night, we pick up our portion afterwards or the next day.

Patience with Children—For us adults, we’re simply going to dinner at another house “on the farm,” but to two-year-old

Wendell, each home is an entirely different environment, with slightly different rules and expectations. It has taken time for him to get comfortable with our dinner rotation, and it’s been essential to practice patience during this adaptation period. Stocking age-appropriate toys that appeal to his nature at each house is helpful. I’ve picked up blocks and toy trucks at thrift stores on the cheap. Wendell now knows what to ask for and where to look for entertainment when in other homes. And it’s a joy for me, as a person without kids, to have Wendell in my life.

Communication—We use group texts to keep each other updated if we need to adjust a day or time, borrow an implement, or ring the virtual dinner bell. We learned early on not to ask someone to join the group without talking together privately first, and to evaluate if that person’s diet and commitment level will be a



Author Rachel with Donovan's Coconut Curry Salmon Soup.

Photos courtesy of Rachel Lyons



An evening meal-share.

good fit. We also give honest feedback about what we do and don't enjoy, which ensures a more satisfying dining experience.

Similar Diets—A relatively heterogeneous diet is important to make our dinner group work. One member has a cow-milk allergy, so we incorporate goat cheese, go dairy-free, or leave cow-dairy products on the side. Aside from that restriction, we all enjoy a wide variety of produce and meat that is local, organic, pastured, and humanely raised.

Appreciation—We express appreciation for each other's efforts by coming to dinner in a timely manner and delivering (figuratively and sometimes literally) when it's our turn to cook, but words of gratitude help fill and motivate us, too.

Meal-Share Yields:

Plenty—We often make large batches of food and offer each other to fill to-go containers after meals. This means that our meal-share provides not just dinners, but lunches, too. We even accrue healthy leftovers by the end of the week. This is one of the un-planned-for yields of our partnership that saves energy and time in the long run, as it doesn't take much more to cook extra.

Time and Personal Energy Savings—Although I'd been evangelizing about the potential benefits of sharing meals for years, I was surprised by the impact it had on my sense of freedom. I was the main cook in my romantic partnership for the past six years. Several meals a week, I am now free to work late in the garden or at my computer, read a book, or walk my dog and still eat a great meal. This lifts a huge burden off of me and takes pressure off my relationship.

Accountability—There is something to be said for being accountable to more than one's spouse. A component that draws me to community is having more voices, input, and mirrors on my romantic partnership, which this meal-share has provided. Admittedly, I was initially wary of including my partner, due to past experiences of him not following through on designated cooking nights. But from the start of this collaboration, he's produced scrumptious meals on time. At first, I felt relief and gratitude—followed unexpectedly by anger that he'd been unable to commit to a cooking schedule when it was just the two of us. What we've realized is that being accountable to others inspires us to do better, and we are all capable of stepping up

and being responsible to the group.

Environmental Savings—My interest in meal-shares was increased after learning about the positive environmental impacts of meal cooperatives from a Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage webinar. Cooking food for several nearby households in one kitchen means we create less food waste, use less energy from the grid, don't need to run our lights and other appliances at home when we're not there, and omit the carbon impact of using a vehicle for transportation to dinner.

Variety—This is one of the most fun aspects of sharing cooking duties. When meals were all on me, I tended to get sick of my go-to dishes and sometimes struggled with inspiration. Now, I eat things I might not normally cook and am enthused to innovate when it's my turn (although I've learned to avoid cooking brand-new recipes on my night—too much pressure). We all genuinely enjoy both cooking and eating, so we are moved to create sensual delights for one another.

Authenticity—Unlike hosting a planned dinner party once in a while, when we're having people over every week, it's inevitable that our less-than-ideal moods and cleanliness levels will be exposed. Whether your group, like ours, intends to share more in the future or not, being authentic with each other is a great way to build relationships and get to really check each other out. I love and appreciate my mealmates all the more after seeing multiple sides of them.

Emotional Sustenance—Laughter, support, and acceptance are gifts of sharing regular meals. We talk about the mundane and the ethereal, sex and politics, dreams and traumas. One night I was moody and low-energy when it was my turn to cook. I knew my partners-in-food were counting on me, so I still managed to get a decent meal together, which kept me from lingering long in my funk. I had the option to say I didn't want company but decided to see how it went. By the end of our dinner and after Terrah read aloud an enthusiastic rendition of *Rainbow Bright and the Color Thieves* to Wendell, I felt cheerful and energized. Because whoever's cooking is free to invite additional people, we've met each other's friends and family members over dinner and are creating a sense of extended family.

Our meal-share has produced so many material and emotional benefits that I can't wait to see what else is in store for our group. We're talking about adding another neighbor for a fourth night, and Terrah and I are planning to grow more food next year in our shared garden. The three of us are also involved in a larger community-forming group, so it's beneficial that we're building trust and cultivating cooperative living skills now, before investing in land together.

My advice? If you want to share meals, tell everyone you know about it, especially your neighbors. And when you get a bite, grab that offer and run with it. I promise, you won't regret it, and you'll get much more than tasty meals out of the deal. 🐦

Rachel Lyons loves growing, cooking, eating, and dreaming about food. You can find her chronicling her minimalist lifestyle and her partner's Passive House-inspired tiny house build on her blog, tinyhappyypeopleblog.com. You can also reach her at rachelyonswrites@gmail.com.

Mental Health Lessons from the Garden

By Craig Chalquist

What can gardening teach you about yourself? According to a growing body of research on horticultural therapy, gardening can lift depression, release stress and anxiety, stimulate the senses, improve sleep, reduce pain, diminish mental fatigue, strengthen the immune system, counter isolation, lessen eating disorder symptoms, and enhance mental and physical recuperation from surgery, post-traumatic stress, and other traumas to mind and body. (See Buzzell and Chalquist, *Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind*.)

Gardening can also teach some invaluable psychological lessons—for example:

Lesson 1: Abandon perfectionism. There is no perfect garden. Pests and weeds see to that. In the garden one must learn to live with what cannot be controlled: some eaten plants, stubborn things that won't grow, weed seeds that overwinter invisibly and come back to life. Nature schools control freaks.

Lesson 2: Things take time to grow. Gardening requires patience and trust in the powers of growth to keep their own schedule. Nature ignores the consumeristic emphasis on obtaining results immediately by going about its leisurely business. No instant (if temporary) gratification. No deadlines. No rush.

Lesson 3: Detach from outcomes. When you water, prepare soil, or plant a seed, you never know what will come of it. Your efforts sink into the ground, sometimes reappearing as new growth and sometimes just vanishing. So it is with our pet projects and goals that we identify with. Often the best that we can do is initiate and let go.

Lesson 4: Everything contributes. That plant you think of as a weed is actually a pioneer: a hardy, fast grower designed to break new ground for ecosystems to come (a process known as “ecological succession”). The pest who mows down a crop adds organic matter to the soil. The wise gardener will not let such visitors dominate, but even while managing them keeps firmly in mind that every living thing has a purpose, that each has its

own niche, that each plant works with those around it, and that nothing in the natural world is wasted.

Lesson 5: Everything self-organizes. The ground you walk on hosts fungi that stretch over wide expanses to manage which nutrients go to which plants and trees: Earth's quiet, web-like nervous system. The wisdom hiding in the ground resembles the wisdom within instinct, intuition, the gut: capable of meaningful arrangements if we allow ourselves to trust and get comfortable with it.

Lesson 6: Things decay and die. We know this as a general truth, but it can be hard to let a cherished part of our life decline, wither, and depart on its own. The garden teaches that some things need to go away; some old structures should decline. Many can become compost for new forms of growth.

Lesson 7: Trust the senses. Science and philosophy have shown the limitations of our powers of perception; but we sometimes forget that, limited though they are, the senses open doorways that connect us to the world and to each other. They also tell us what nourishes and what does not; what is good for us and what is bitter and should be spit out.

Lesson 8: Nature bats first and last. The soil you cultivate took millions of years of weathering and building up to prepare. The living world will have the last say after you are done with it. If our lives are a kind of book, then nature provides the bookends. Despite all our anxiety and doubt, loneliness and uncertainty, the forces of life and the cycles of seasons always have us firmly in hand. 🌱

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Your Community and the Law

If your community has a dreadful legal problem, one thing that *doesn't* work is to *not* get real about the worst potential outcomes for your community. It *doesn't* work to prevaricate, to use euphemisms, and to tiptoe around the subject because of the belief you'd be "negative" if you speak directly about the horrible things that could potentially happen. A dangerous yet common theory is that *talking about* such a thing might cause you to mentally picture it, which might make it manifest!

What a load of hooley! A doctor first needs to know *which* leg is broken and in what way it's broken before it can be set. A plumber has to know where the leak is, how bad it is, and where the valve is to shut off the water. *Not* looking at a big problem doesn't work. A community and its lawyer must know the worst things that could happen from their legal problem before they can protect the community with an effective legal strategy.

I learned this the hard way. My community, Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina, first realized in 2010 how dreadful our financial and legal arrangements were. It's as if the shock of this news disoriented and disempowered us. Many felt stuck and helpless and unable to act. Some didn't believe there was really a problem. Or they believed there was one but they didn't understand it and couldn't bear to think about it. Some thought if we ignored it it would go away.

I finally realized how strange we were behaving. Even though our lawyer suggested a truly effective legal solution I realized that in our meetings deciding whether to accept his legal solution we were only talking *around* the issue. We used euphemisms; we never broke the apparent social taboo against graphically describing what in fact could happen if we didn't fix the problem. I thought it was high time for community shock therapy.

"We need to take into account the worst things that could happen," I blurted out at our next meeting. "The county could start fining us for not complying with their subdivision regulations—fining us retroactively for every day since we started. Or someone could successfully sue us and the Court could go after Earthaven property. Or someone could sue one of us individually for some reason, like a car accident or owing money, and the Court could go after the person's biggest asset, ownership in Earthaven. Or a departing member or former member could successfully sue us for, um..." (Readers, I apologize but I'm not going to describe what we'd been doing wrong.)

"If any of this happened, we couldn't afford the legal fees," I continued. "We couldn't pay fines for violating regulations or pay any punitive damages. If we couldn't pay them, the Sheriff could come out here and hold a public auction and sell part of our land to the highest bidder. It would severely damage our community. And land that got sold could include your neighborhood or mine; your house or mine. Or *all* of our land might need to be sold off. Earthaven could be disbanded permanently. Some of us, or all of us, could lose all the money we'd ever put into building our house and developing our homesite. Some of us could lose our life savings. Or end up bankrupt and homeless."

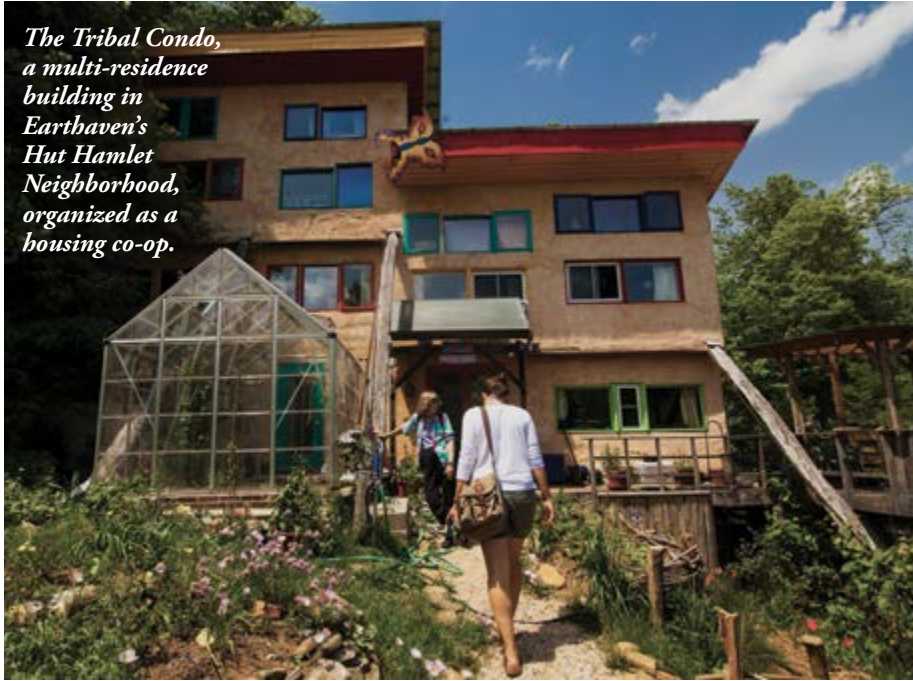
"Stop being negative!" yelled an angry member.

"Fearmonger!," accused another.

"If *you're* feeling fear it's not because of what *I* said," I responded heatedly. "This

"If any of this happened, we couldn't afford the legal fees," I continued. "Earthaven could be disbanded permanently. Some of us could lose our life savings."

The Tribal Condo, a multi-residence building in Earthaven's Hut Hamlet Neighborhood, organized as a housing co-op.



Lois Arkin, Los Angeles Eco-Village founder, interviewed by local media.



Get right to the heart of the worst of what could go wrong, face it, and deal with it.

actually *is* our situation.”

“But no one would ever try to sue us!” protested another.

“Oh yes they would,” I said. “Seven different departing members over the years have sent us lawyer letters implying, warning, or outright threatening us with legal action if we didn’t reimburse the money they paid for a homesite here. Even though we told them up front we don’t reimburse this.” At that point I read out loud the names of each former member who’d sent a lawyer letter—people we all knew well and were friends with.

Shock hit in the meeting. Some people felt more scared or demoralized than before. What I said was too blunt and too horrible. And too real to ignore. Some people were angry with our founders for inadvertently creating a problem this bad. Others were mad at *me*—how dare I be so negative and unspiritual in our community business meeting?

Yet this graphic description of what *could* happen to our community helped some people burst through the fog of denial and realize we had a real problem and we needed to act. With my “shock treatment” at the meeting, and with the efforts of tireless community members who worked on this issue for *years*, we finally resolved our financial and legal challenges. Whew!

Friends, if your community suddenly falls into a financial and legal pit, please

don’t let it take eight years to resolve, as it did for us. Get right to the heart of the worst of what could go wrong, face it, and deal with it. If you personally understand the worst possible things that could happen if the community doesn’t change things, but people are skirting the issue and using euphemisms, don’t be shy; don’t be New Agey; don’t be politically correct. Take courage and speak right up! People who are shocked and angry that you may have broken a community taboo by being so blunt and direct could be jolted out of passivity and into taking action. And they’ll surely forgive you in time (and will probably forget you ever said it). So, if something like this happens to your group, stand up and tell it like it is!

Seven Things Every Community Should Know

I want communities everywhere to be well aware of legal-financial realities. The founders of my community didn’t know this, and it absolutely came back to bite us! Here’s what I want you to know:

(1) Your forming community will be (or your existing community already is) embedded in and subject to local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Federal tax requirements, federal laws regarding illegal substance use, firearms, and other issues. Federal and state laws regarding the rights and responsibilities of one’s legal entity(s). Annual re-

porting requirements with the state, and state health department and environmental quality regulations. County subdivision regulations, zoning regulations, building codes, and property tax requirements.

(2) Learn what these laws and regulations in your area are, how they affect your community—and what the legal and financial risks may be to your community and to each member if you *don’t* comply with them.

(3) Educate your community members about this.

(4) Decide to *either comply* or *not comply* with laws and regulations affecting you. Or comply with some but not others.

(5) *If your group decides not to comply with some laws, be willing to take the associated legal and financial risks. Tell all potential members about these risks. Full disclosure!*

(6) Orient all members, especially new ones, to the legal entity(s) your group uses, and the benefits, responsibilities, and challenges of each.

(7) Especially educate your members about lawsuit and liability issues, so everyone understands the degree of liability protection the community does and does not have.

Good thing for us that most communities do understand the law and make sure their communities are legally sustainable!

Why Have a Legal Entity at All?

“Legal entities,” created and regulated by states or provinces, offer a legally recognized set of rights, protections, and requirements. They are used to co-own property, run a business, provide a non-profit service, or manage investments. Legal entities can own assets, buy property, and enter into business contracts with other organizations or individuals.

Your community definitely needs a legal entity. If you *don't* have one to co-own your property, but put all founders' names on the deed, it could be hard to get a loan to buy and develop the property, since most lenders and financial institutions don't lend to a group of individuals. Without a legal entity it could be difficult to add new members in property ownership and remove departing ones. With a legal entity you'll probably owe

**Please don't
create or manage
your community
without legal
advice!**

less money for federal, state, and county taxes than if you owned your property or ran your educational organization or community business as individuals—and for educational projects and businesses you'll probably need separate legal entities. If your community, educational organization, or community business were successfully sued—or even if one of your individual community members were sued—you'd need the liability protection of a legal entity.

The Six Legal Entities Most Communities Use

Most communities in the US use one or more of the following business or non-profit entities. Each offers limited liability protection for community members, board members, etc.

Homeowners Associations (HOA) and **Condominium Associations** are designed for individuals or households who have a deed to their own lot, house, apartment, or housing unit, and shared ownership of common property. These entities offer tax advantages—all funds collected from members and spent on buying, developing, managing, repairing, or maintaining the property are tax deductible. These entities differ in how the individual property is owned.

Limited Liability Companies (LLC)

offer the same limited liability advantages as for-profit corporations but are easier to set up. While created for a businesses, an LLC can also be used to own property.

Housing Cooperatives are typically used to own a house or apartment building, but can also own land. Co-op members own one or more shares of undivided interest in the property, and have an Occupancy Agreement for use rights in a particular co-op house, apartment, or plot of land. Shareholders can choose their community members, unlike other legal entities in the US and Canada to co-own property. Housing co-op members can say “Yes” or “No Thank You” to potential new members who don't support the community's purpose, or who raise red flags.

Non-Exempt Nonprofits are nonprofits which offer liability protection and can be used to co-own land or manage community activities, but whose founders don't seek a tax-exempt designation from the federal government.

501(c)(3) Nonprofits can receive tax-deductible donations. They're best used to run educational programs or create land trusts, but not to own the community's property. A 501(c)(3) tends to attract younger people with few assets, and deflect away people seeking to build equity in the community. So communities that own their land as a 501(c)(3) tend to have high turnover.

See sidebar, “Why Not to Use Joint Tenancy or Tenancy in Common,” p. 63. For more general overview information on legal entities for communities, please see “Legal Structures for Intentional Communities in the US” in COMMUNITIES #173 (pp. 46-55), reprinted in *Wisdom of Communities* Volume 1, *Starting a Community* (pp. 48-57), and also appearing in slightly longer form in Edition VII of *Communities Directory* (pp. 576-586). For good advice about which legal entity(s) would be best for your community, please seek a lawyer licensed in your state or province who specializes in one or more of these legal entities—and who already understands intentional communities.

If One Is Good, Two (or More) Could Be Better

Since no one business or real estate



FROG, one of three cohousing neighborhoods organized as housing co-ops at Eco Village at Ithaca.

entity really matches an intentional community, some communities combine them to better fulfill their purpose and meet their goals.

My community, Earthaven Ecovillage, resolved its legal and financial issues by dividing its 329-acre mountain property into 12 different 11-acre neighborhood parcels and the remaining 197 acres of shared land, and creating 14 different legal entities. Each neighborhood has title to their parcel. Nine neighborhoods use housing co-ops to own their parcel, two neighborhoods use an LLC, and one uses a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Each neighborhood is a member of the Earthaven Homeowners Association (HOA), which owns the remaining 197 acres, which it manages, repairs, and maintains. Each individual Earthaven member is also a member of the Earthaven Community Association (ECA), a non-exempt nonprofit that manages all non-property aspects of community life—website, visitors, tours, membership, work exchangers, social and spiritual events, and so on.

EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI), a rural ecovillage community in New York State with three different cohousing neighborhoods on its 175 acres, uses six legal entities. “One of the reasons for creating so many different entities,” wrote Bill Goodman, a community member and lawyer, “was our need to satisfy...the town of Ithaca, the New York Attorney General’s Office, banks, and insurance companies....We had to create a complex framework to fit both our needs and the expectations of the legal and financial worlds.”

EcoVillage at Ithaca, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, owns all the property outside the boundaries of the cohousing neighborhoods. Each of the community’s cohousing neighborhoods owns its buildings and (except for SONG neighborhood) owns the land beneath it: the FROG Housing Co-op, SONG Housing Co-op, and TREE Housing Co-op. The EcoVillage at Ithaca Village Association (EVIVA) is a non-exempt nonprofit which owns and manages roads, water and sewer lines, parking lots, swimming pond, and the land immediately around the FROG and TREE neighborhoods. The Center for Transformative Con-

Why NOT to Use Joint Tenancy or Tenancy in Common

Real estate law provides two legal entities for co-owning shared property with undivided interests. This means all co-owners have an equal financial interest in and equal rights in the property and share equally in its liabilities and profits. But each of these entities has serious drawbacks for communities. With both entities a community member could sell, mortgage, or give away their interest to another person *without* the membership approval of the community. It could end up with a resident they don’t know and don’t want as a member. In Joint Tenancy, if a community member goes into debt, the creditor seeking collection *could force the sale of the property* to get the cash value of that member’s share in the property. In Tenants in Common, if a member wanted to sell their interest and move away but the community couldn’t afford to buy them out at that time, that member could also *force the sale of the property* in order to get the value of their equity in the property as their portion of the sale. So please don’t use either of these!

—DLC

sciousness, a second 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was instrumental in developing each neighborhood and runs the community’s educational programs.

Occidental Arts and Ecology Center (OAEC) in California has two legal entities and a commercial lease: Sowing Circle LLC owns the land, Occidental Arts and Ecology Center (OAEC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, owns and manages their educational programs. The OAEC nonprofit leases most of the community’s property.

Los Angeles Eco-Village (LAEV) uses two entities. Urban Soil/Terra Urbana, a Limited Equity Housing Co-op, owns two adjacent two-story apartment buildings and a fourplex unit, but not the ground beneath these buildings. The Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, owns each of these land parcels but not the buildings.

Yes, You Need a Lawyer!

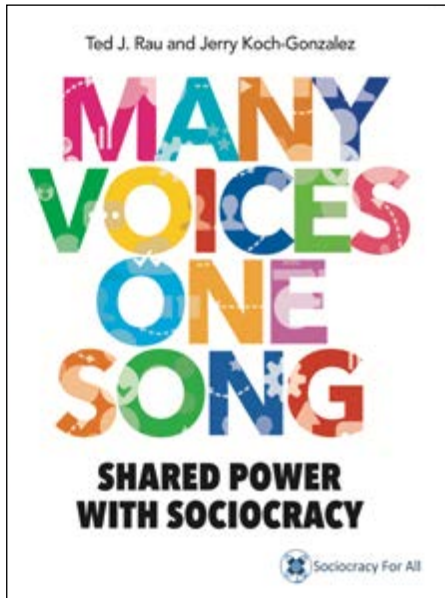
Please don’t create or manage your community without legal advice! A lawyer can save you heartbreak, wrenching conflict, and thousands of dollars. (Earthaven’s first lawyer, for example, warned our founders against what they wanted to do. Unfortunately they ignored her advice.)

So, first, you need a lawyer who specializes in whatever kind(s) of legal entities you do use or will use to co-own your property and/or to manage any nonprofit educational organizations or run any community businesses. I recommend finding other intentional communities in your state or province who use the same legal entity(s) and asking who their lawyer was. Their lawyer will already know what an intentional community is, so you don’t have to spend expensive billable hours educating him or her about it!

It’s also wise to use a real estate lawyer to protect your interests when you buy the property.

You can choose one or more legal entities and *then* hire a lawyer who specializes in those entities. Or, you can hire a lawyer first and ask them which legal entity(s) they recommend for your situation. But please make sure you’re hiring a lawyer already familiar with intentional communities! 🍷

Diana Leafe Christian, author of Creating a Life Together and Finding Community and former editor of COMMUNITIES, speaks at conferences, offers consultations, and leads workshops internationally on the tools and processes to create successful new intentional communities, and on Sociocracy, an effective governance and decision-making method. She has written on community legal issues for COMMUNITIES; the FIC’s Communities Directory; the Gaia Education book, Gaian Economics; and several chapters of Creating a Life Together.



Many Voices One Song: Shared Power with Sociocracy

By Ted J. Rau and Jerry Koch-Gonzalez

Sociocracy for All, Amherst, Massachusetts, 2018,
available as paperback (8" x 10") or e-book, 275 pages.
Available from Communities Bookstore (ic.org/bookstore).

Because I believe a community's self-governance and decision-making method critically affects its well-being, I now recommend either modified consensus like the N St. Method, or Sociocracy.

So I'm pleased that *Many Voices One Song: Shared Power with Sociocracy* is now available. It was written by Sociocracy trainers Ted J. Rau and Jerry Koch-Gonzalez in 2018 and published by their nonprofit, Sociocracy for All (SoFA).

For people already familiar with Sociocracy and perhaps using it in their group (and already familiar with Nonviolent Communication), *Many Voices One Song* is a valuable resource. I appreciate its warm and kindly tone, clarity and emotional authenticity, clear visual presentations of various aspects of Sociocracy, and the sheer comprehensive coverage of the topic. It includes field-tested tips for intentional communities using this governance method, drawn from the authors' personal experiences using Sociocracy in their own community and teaching it in their online trainings: www.sociocracyforall.org. I imagine Sociocracy-savvy readers using the book to delve more deeply into any Sociocracy topic. I'm a Sociocracy trainer myself, and *Many Voices One Song* has enhanced my own understanding—it's a great resource for me personally.

At the same time I'm concerned that some of the ways the authors present So-

ciocracy could be confusing or even lead to community conflict for people who don't know much about Sociocracy and are reading *Many Voices One Song* to learn how to use it in their community. For example, the authors don't begin with a broad introductory overview of the general structure of Sociocracy, its meeting processes, and how these work together; but after an introduction to Sociocracy's values, principles, and history, immediately describe its basic circle structure and the multiple configurations these circles can take in different organizations. And while providing a glossary at the beginning, the authors sometimes use Sociocracy terms in the text but don't define them until later chapters.

In early chapters they combine Sociocracy's consent decision-making process with the "basic human needs" aspect of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) with no NVC context or explanation that "needs" doesn't mean *strategies* to meet one's needs or one's personal preferences—people often mistakenly conflate the two. They also don't explain *why* they combined NVC and Sociocracy, or even *that* they combined them. Unaware readers could logically conclude the "needs" aspect of NVC is a normal part of Sociocracy. The authors don't explain until several chapters later that by "needs" they actually mean the needs of one's *circle*—its "aims"—not one's personal needs. Early in the book they write, "We define equivalence as 'everyone's needs matter,'" and "What Sociocracy does is... to hold everyone's needs in consideration at all times." This could be easily misinterpreted by readers steeped in classic, traditional consensus, who could assume one's needs—interpreted as *their personal preferences*—must be granted when considering

proposals in Sociocracy. Not true!

The authors also write, "Readers can use as few or many features and tools (of Sociocracy) as they want," and, "Change anything you want—by consent." However, they *also* strongly advise Sociocracy works best when used the way they present it. Recently co-author Jerry Koch-Gonzalez and I talked about intentional communities we've each visited that altered Sociocracy and/or combined it with consensus—each one was experiencing awful conflict. I shared with Jerry four basic requirements I believe are needed for a community to use Sociocracy effectively: (1) Everyone learns it, (2) Use all its parts, (3) Use it as your Sociocracy trainer taught it, and (4) Get periodic review trainings. This matched his experience teaching Sociocracy to communities too, and he said he hoped to reconsider the "feel free to change it" suggestions in future editions of the book.

As noted earlier, I highly recommend *Many Voices One Song* to readers already familiar with Sociocracy and Nonviolent Communication, and especially people who have studied with the authors. And I personally am learning much from it. However, because of these concerns I feel cautious about recommending it for people new to Sociocracy or hoping to learn how to use it from the book. Of course all these issues may be addressed in future editions. 🐾

Diana Leafe Christian is the author of Creating a Life Together and Finding Community. She teaches Sociocracy in the US and internationally through webinars and workshops, and is currently finishing her book on Sociocracy for intentional communities. See www.DianaLeafeChristian.org.



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 Only 3 homes left for sale!
www.ravensroostcoho.org



Prairie Hill Cohousing, Iowa's first cohousing community, has new homes available and plans for more. We are a multigenerational community of kids, pets, and grownups who live in private homes clustered around a Common House on an 8-acre site near downtown Iowa City. Our shared green space includes gardens, orchards, and prairie. About half of our 36 homes are sold, and the Common House is complete with kitchen, guest rooms, and space for activities. You may own a cozy green flat in a fourplex, a one- or two-story duplex, or a single-level townhouse. All are built to meet Energy Star and LEED standards of energy-efficiency and sustainability.

Watch eagles from your kitchen window, deer from your patio, and miles of countryside from atop our hillside. We are situated in a walkable neighborhood close to parks, restaurants, schools, and bike trails. Prairie Hill hosts community sings, climate action meetings, Tuesday night suppers, frequent potlucks, movie nights, and all kinds of spontaneous events. It is a great place to raise a family and to live comfortably as a single.

Iowa City is a cosmopolitan community perennially listed as one of America's top-rated places to live. As the first North American UNESCO City of Literature and home to the University of Iowa, the city has a vibrant cultural scene and Big 10 athletics.

Learn more at iowacitycohousing.org. Come for a visit. Then join us!



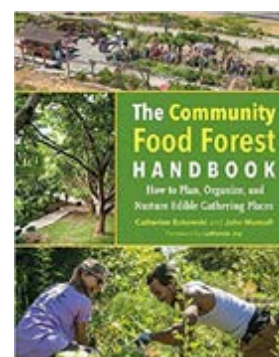
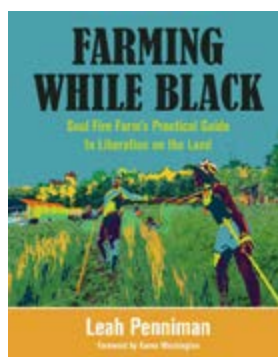
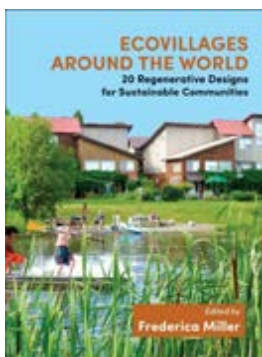
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Fellowship for Intentional Communities

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**CENTER FOR
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40 YEARS: 1976 – 2016



The Center for Communal Studies (CCS) is a clearinghouse for information and research on communal groups worldwide, past and present. Located on the campus of the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH COLLECTION

We invite researchers to use the Center's Collection of primary and secondary materials on more than 600 historic and contemporary communes. The Collection includes over 10,000 images and a reading room.

Visit: www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections.
Email the archivist: jagreene@usi.edu.

REGIONAL RESEARCH

The Center is part of a rich array of historic communal resources within a 30-mile radius of Evansville that includes the Harmonist and Owenite village of New Harmony, Indiana. The Center sponsors lectures, conferences and exhibits, and has an abundance of programming resources.

Visit: www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal.center

CENTER PRIZES AND RESEARCH TRAVEL GRANT

The Center annually awards cash prizes for the best student papers on historic or contemporary communal groups, intentional communities, and utopias. Deadline for submission is 1 March. The Center also annually awards a Research Travel Grant to fund research in our Collection. Applications are due by 1 May.

For information contact:
812-465-1656
or Casey Harison at charison@usi.edu



REACH

REACH is our column for all your Classified needs. In addition to ads intended to match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, Reach offers ads for events, land, internships, services, books, personals, and more to people interested in communities.

You may contact our Advertising Manager, Gigi Wahba, to place a Reach ad. Email Ads@ic.org, call 415-991-0541, or go to communities.ic.org/ads/ for more information or to submit your ad online.

THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #183 - Summer 2019 (out in June) is April 28, 2019.

The rate for Reach ads is... Up to 50 Words: \$25/issue or \$60/year; Up to 100 Words: \$50/issue or \$100/year; Up to 250 Words: \$75/issue or \$200/year. If you are an FIC Member you may take off an additional 10%.

You may pay using a credit card or PayPal by contacting Gigi online or over the phone using the contact information above. Or, you may mail a check or money order payable to Communities with your ad text, word count, and duration of the ad, plus your contact information, to: The Fellowship for Intentional Community, 1 Dancing Rabbit Ln, Box 23, Rutledge, MO 63563.

Intentional Communities listing in the Reach section are also invited to create a free listing in the online Communities Directory at Directory.ic.org, and also to try our online classified advertising options. Special combination packets are available to those who wish to list both in the magazine and online.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

PRAIRIE HILL COHOUSING SEEKS NEW MEMBERS for its community of 36 green homes, a Common House, and gardens on 8 acres near downtown Iowa City and the University of Iowa. We encourage families with children to join our multigenerational community. New homes are under construction now. For information, see iowacitycohousing.org.

RAVEN'S ROOST COHOUSING: ALASKA, THE LAST FRONTIER. Have you thought about intentional living, want beauty and nature right out your door? Ravens Roost Cohousing in Anchorage AK, has 3 homes for sale. Each unit is a private home with southern exposure. Common amenities include a Common House with large kitchen and dining area, a library, kids play room, guest rooms; workshop; and gardens. The neighborhood is on 6 acres of green space, close to shopping, trails, hospitals and the University. Members overwhelming agree that the people and connections are the best part of life at Ravens Roost. Check out our website: ravensroostcoho.org.

LOST VALLEY EDUCATION AND EVENT CENTER IS SEEKING SOMEONE TO FILL THE ROLE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR at our sociocratically-run, permaculture- and NVC-oriented intentional community and aspiring ecovillage on 87 acres, 18 miles from Eugene, Oregon. Other new residential applicants also welcome. Please visit lostvalley.org; contact us at board@lostvalley.org or 541-937-3351.

HUNDREDFOLD FARM IS A 14-HOME COHOUSING COMMUNITY NEAR GETTYSBURG, PA. Our custom designed energy efficient single family solar homes are surrounded by 80 acres of fields and forest. Community gardens and a greenhouse provide organic produce year-round. Four ready to build lots available. Come grow with us! www.hundredfoldfarm.org

DANCING RABBIT ECOVILLAGE IS AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL NON-PROFIT focused on living, researching, and demonstrating sustainable living possibilities. We live, work and play on 280 acres of lovely rolling prairie in Northeast Missouri, and welcome new members to join us in creating a vibrant community and cooperative culture! Together we're living abundant and fulfilling low-carbon lives. We use renewable energy, practice organic agriculture, share vehicles, utilize natural and green building techniques, share some common infrastructure, and make our own fun. Come live lightly with us, and be part of the solution! www.dancingrabbit.org or 660-883-5511 or dancingrabbit@ic.org.

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Founded in 2010, WolfStone Ranch is a licensed nonprofit animal shelter that has so far saved the lives of over 250 dogs and cats. And now I want to form an Intentional Community with Kindred Spirits as passionate and committed as I, to help me expand WolfStone Ranch into a **SPIRITUAL RETREAT CENTER FOR PETS... and their people!**

WolfStone Ranch's overall goal is to become a deeply spiritually-based, passionately activist community dedicated to making the rural Midwest a much more compassionate place for all the animals (and people) who live in this region.

First, please see my online ad at www.ic.org/advert/wolfstone-ranch... and then check out my website, wolfstoneranch.org.

DIVERSITY is crucial to the success of the new WolfStone Ranch. Therefore, I am enthusiastically seeking people of all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual identities... and religions that do not practice torture or sacrifice of animals. (Being a vegetarian is required.)

IF YOU RESONATE WITH MY VISION for WolfStone Ranch, then you will be welcome here! Prospective members may be invited for a one-week work and visioning stay at the ranch.



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Ingenium is an innovative project where kindred spirits of many types share their talents and passions, and inspire each other to cultivate their healthiest, most creative selves.

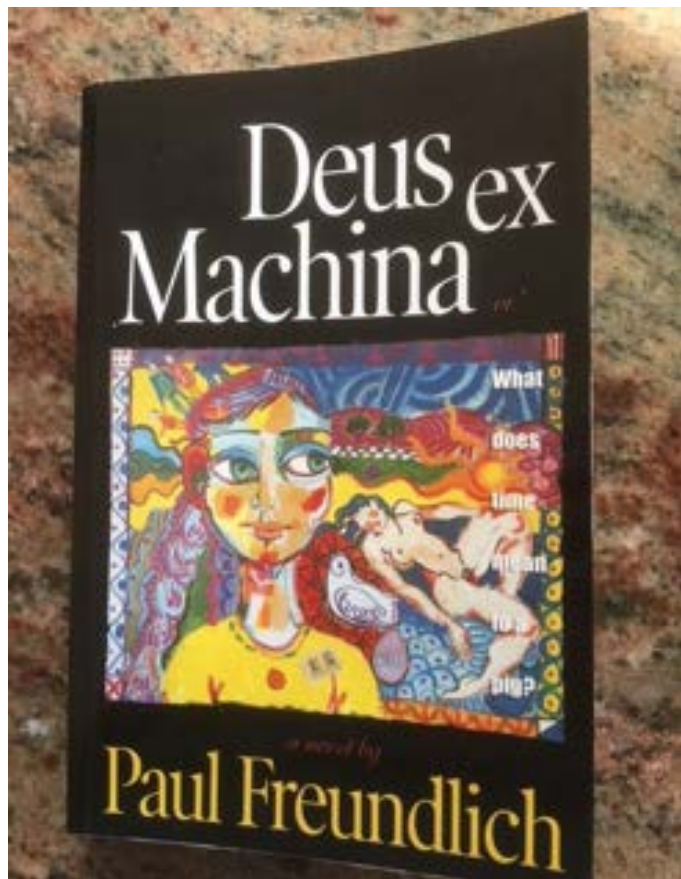
Current rentals available

Visits are encouraged during our monthly tour.

Sign up at our MeetUp site: www.MeetUp.com/Ingenium-Expressive-Arts-Village

November, 1963. In the middle of the Pentagon's grey corridors, the inner courtyard is a green haven for civilians and military on their lunch break. On a crisp fall day, an attractive young matron waves to her naval lieutenant husband. It is 12:15 pm, and Kay has nothing on her mind except the small picnic basket she has brought. Along with the rest of the United States, she is oblivious to preparations in a Dallas office building, perhaps on a nearby grassy knoll, which at this moment remain suspended in time, subject to intervention and choice, if...

If we only knew then what we know now...



Plunked down in the middle of the 20th century, reverted to his childhood body, but his memory intact, Joshua Leyden takes a run at revising his own life, and changing a future that needs some tinkering.

“Held me every step of the way. A great read, challenging ideas, fascinating and seductive.”
– David Kahn, Harvard Faculty.

Consider two trains heading in opposite directions, but stopped in a station. While the trains wait, it is possible to change between them. Transferring passengers would then head down their own timelines, reviewing past images incrementally. So it is with memories. So it is with dreams.

“Wonderful, touching characters, reworking our fate.” – Hazel Henderson, Economist.

Each night, the sun went down, Nora to bed, and Josh prowled around her soul, searching for a key to unlock their mystery. While Nora slept beyond a narrow wall, Josh fought the need to break on through to the other side – replaying every mistake he'd ever made in either life. Rising, hitting the brandy, writing in a notebook lest the typewriter wake the girl. He couldn't even feel sorry for himself when he knew Nora had it far worse.

It's about time: A love story, both provocative and playful...

Paul Freundlich, Founder of Green America and Dance New England; for a decade an Editor of “Communities”; filmmaker, essayist and activist has created a journey that transcends time and reworks reality.

Available from Amazon.com [search: Paul Freundlich]

THE VALLEY OF LIGHT is a community of cultural creatives that rests along the New River in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. With over \$2 million invested, our 22-acre campus is debt-free and includes 3 homes, 8 building pads, campground, barn, garden, "Peace Pentagon" conference and community center, and other amenities. We share our campus with The Oracle Institute, a charity that operates a spirituality school, award-winning press, and peace-building practice. We seek co-founding members in five Paths: Native (farmers and landscapers); Scientist (we love geeks!); Artisan (artists and builders); Peacemaker (teachers and activists); Oracle (spiritual students). Please visit www.TheOracleInstitute.org/about-our-community & PeacePentagon.net. Contact Katie@TheOracleInstitute.org.

DURHAM, NC 55+ COMMUNITY Village Hearth Cohousing welcomes LGBTs, straight friends, and allies. Building 28 accessible, energy-efficient homes clustered on 15 beautiful acres. Only a few left. Construction started November 2018 in culturally vibrant progressive Durham for move-in late 2019. Join us now! www.VillageHearthCohousing.com

ROCKY CORNER COHOUSING, THE FIRST IN CONNECTICUT! Here is what makes us unique: We are the first cohousing in southern New England, the closest to NYC. We are 5 miles from the small vibrant city of New Haven where political action and fine arts are thriving. We have been using sociocracy as our governance and decision-making model since 2012. We use permaculture principles to decide how to use our land. Neighbors can garden and farm together as much or as little as they want. We will own our individual energy-efficient homes and co-own organic farmland and a beautiful common house. Here are some of our values: We strive to create a neighborhood that is supportive and inspiring for individuals and families. We support people of all ages to enter, stay and participate in the community throughout their lives. We value our children as members of the community encouraging their participation and leadership. We work cooperatively for mutual benefit. The community promotes the physical and emotional health, safety and security of our members and guests. We make space in our lives for play and artistic expression. We encourage continual learning, skill sharing and teaching. We consider the Rocky Corner community, the wider human community and the health of the Earth when making decisions and choices. Does this speak to you? We have Affordable and market-rate homes for sale that will be ready to occupy in spring 2019. Construction has started. Come join us now! Find out more at www.rockycorner.org.

COWEETA HERITAGE CENTER AND TALKING ROCK FARM are located in the mountains of Western North Carolina in a beautiful and diverse temperate rainforest. CHC is looking for others who would like to join together to form an Intentional Community embracing the principles of Voluntary Simplicity and Healing the Earth and Each Other. Simply put, we wish "to live simply so that others may simply live." It is a recognition that nature provides us with valuable services and resources that we can use to enrich our lives. Utilizing local resources, appropriate technology, and working cooperatively, we can discover creative ways to meet our needs as "directly and simply as possible." Come join Coweeta and learn how to live lightly on the land and enjoy the Earth's bounty! Contact Coweeta for more info or to schedule a visit!! Contact Paul at coweeta@gmail.com.

COHOUSING A LA MEXICANA! Located near Ajijic Lake Chapala, 3 Acres are now being developed with new homes. We stand for Sustainability, Community, Multiversity and Aging in Place. We are seeking quality VISIONARY and ADVENTUROUS members/investors to embrace and help us transcend this shared dream. Contact Jaime Navarro at info@rancholasaludvillage.com or www.rancholasaludvillage.com

COMMUNITIES FORMING

RALSTON CREEK COHOUSING ARVADA CO - Imagine an energetic group of eclectic families who value treading lightly on the land. They come together near Old Town to design a vibrant common house and 20 private dwellings. Envision a modern three story building with an outdoor courtyard in a rural setting with urban amenities. What if this whole urban village called Geos was powered by solar and ground source energy (net zero), had a community garden and a view of the mountains. Picture being near a creekside bike path with 300 days of sunshine. It heads to both the light rail and open space parks. You unplug your electric car, hop onto I-70 to ski and come home to relax with a glass of wine and dinner with friends. www.ralstoncreekcohousing.org

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LAYTONVILLE, MENDOCINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA. NEWLY RENOVATED THREE-BEDROOM GREEN HOME FOR SALE ON TWO ACRES. All permaculture bells and whistles onsite, ready for move in, workshops, Airbnb rental, lots of extras. Please see website for more information: <http://mendocounty-greenneighborhoodhomeforsale-laytonville.com/> Beautifully restored hardwood floors, custom woodworking, redwood siding, grid-tie solar and solar hot water, new roof and septic, wood burning stove, outdoor kitchen with cob oven, outdoor solar shower, permaculture landscaping, greywater, deep reliable well with filtration, large barn, and more! One mile outside of town, easy walk to public schools. Three additional parcels available.

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The Valley of Light A Community for Cultural Creatives

Seeking Farmers, Builders, Techies, Artists, and Activists

The Valley of Light is located along the New River in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. With over \$2 million invested, our 22-acre campus is debt-free and includes 3 homes, 8 building pads, vegetable garden, barn, chickens & goats, campground, trails, labyrinth, kiva, medicine wheel, and many other amenities. We share our campus with **The Oracle Institute**, an educational charity that operates a spirituality school, award-winning press, and peacebuilding practice.

Become a Founding Member of our Evolving Campus

One of our founders manages the **Peace Pentagon**, where we hold retreats and our community meetings. Another founder created **Manna**, an alternate currency for social good. We are seeking more social architects involved in progressive and cutting-edge movements!



www.TheOracleInstitute.org
www.PeacePentagon.net
www.Mannabase.com

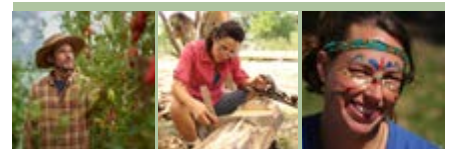


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Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is an intentional community and educational non-profit focused on living, researching, and demonstrating sustainable living possibilities.



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Permaculture is a philosophy of working with, rather than against, nature; of protracted & thoughtful observation rather than protracted & thoughtless labor; and of looking at plants and animals in all their functions, rather than treating any area as a single-product system.

Bill Mollison



Cohousing provides the community we need to thrive while ensuring the privacy we enjoy.

CohoUS is a national non-profit raising awareness of the benefits of cohousing and supporting the development of cohousing communities nationwide.

We link people with the resources they need to create and nurture cohousing communities while helping them connect and share with each other.

www.cohousing.org

Her experience as a member helps her to understand the issues facing other cohousing groups and gives her unique insight into the group dynamics that affect the design process. Laura served on the Cohousing Association of the US board for five years and regularly leads workshops at their conferences. Contact her at 413-549-5799 or www.facdarchitects.com.

THE ECOVILLAGE INSTITUTE - WANT TO LEARN ABOUT ORGANIC FARMING AND COMMUNITIES? We are offering Organic Farming Internships from May to October. All our programs take place at the heart of our community, La Cite Ecologique of New Hampshire. Learn more at www.citeecologiquenh.org or email info@citeecologiquenh.org.

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MORNINGLAND COMMUNITY is offering a few Spring/Summer work/study opportunities for those interested in deepening their meditation practice to include contemplative service, puja + study of Bhagavad-Gita + spiritual astrology. Some co-housing available. Our community is offline, digitally unplugged, and a great place to catch your breath. Call 562.433.9906 for more information and to apply. "Simple living and high thinking" -Yogananda. 2600 E. 7th St, Long Beach, CA 90804.

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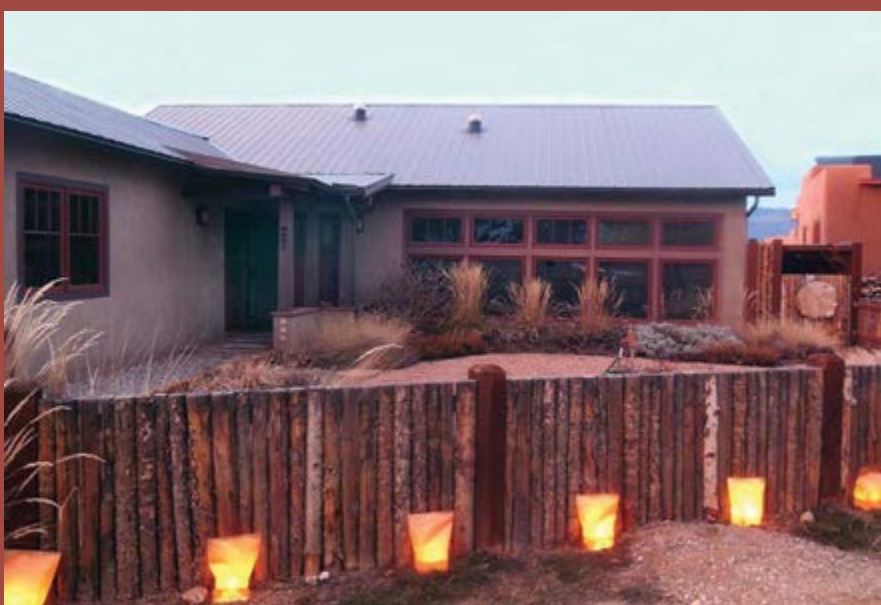
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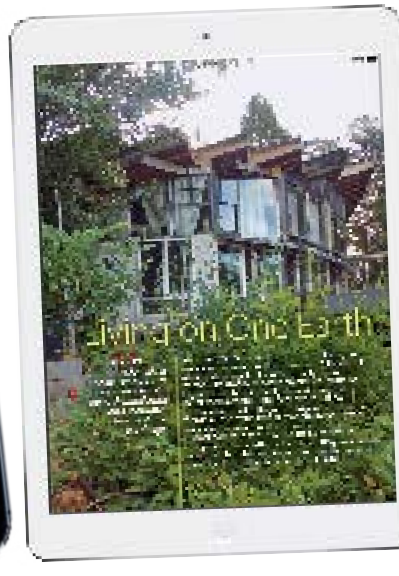
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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA—CENTER FOR COMMUNAL STUDIES (CCS) - THE CENTER FOR COMMUNAL STUDIES (CCS) was created in 1976 as a clearinghouse for information and a research resource on communal groups worldwide, past and present. Located on the campus of the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville, the Center encourages scholarship, meetings, public understanding and learning about historic and contemporary intentional communities. ARCHIVAL RESEARCH COLLECTION: We invite researchers to use the Center's Collection of primary and secondary materials on more than 500 historic and contemporary communes. Our Collection is housed at Rice Library and has over 10,000 images and a reading room with an extensive library. Online resources may be found at <http://www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections>. Email the archivist at jagreene@usi.edu for information. REGIONAL RESEARCH: The CCS is part of a rich array of historic communal resources within a 30-mile radius of Evansville that includes the famous Harmonist and Owenite village of New Harmony. New Harmony's Workingmen's Institute Library and the State Museum collection also offer unique research opportunities. PROGRAMS: The CCS sponsors lectures, conferences and exhibits. The Center will sponsor a Communal Studies Minor in the USI College of Liberal Arts beginning fall 2019. WEBSITE: The CCS website (<http://www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal-center>) serves scholars, students and the interested public. CENTER PRIZES AND RESEARCH TRAVEL GRANT: The CCS annually awards a Prize of \$250 for the Best Undergraduate Student Paper and a Prize of \$500 for the Best Graduate Student Paper on historic or contemporary communal groups, intentional communities, and utopias. Deadline for submission is 1 March. The Center also annually awards a \$2,000 Research Travel Grant to fund research in the Communal Studies Collection. Applications are due by 1 May. LOCATION AND CONTACT: The CCS is located in Room 3022 of Rice Library at the University of Southern Indiana. Evansville has a regional airport with jet service from Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas and elsewhere. You may contact the Center by phone 812/465-1656 or email director Casey Harison at charison@usi.edu.

FREE GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES at Tree Bressen's website: www.treegroup.info. Topics include consensus, facilitation, conflict, community building, alternative meeting formats, etc. Workshop handouts, articles, exercises, and more!

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HONORING STARHAWK 2019 KOZENY COMMUNITARIAN AWARD RECIPIENT

(continued from p. 76)

where there is a near-desperate hunger for positive alternatives to the excesses and abuse that are endemic to competition.

Because the need is ubiquitous she travels internationally, lecturing and teaching on earth-based spirituality, the tools of ritual, and the skills of activism.

Cooperative Leadership

Many cooperative groups struggle to develop healthy models of cooperative leadership, and Starhawk, working through the Reclaiming Collective, has offered training in community-building leadership councils as just such a model. In addition to the impact of her workshops, she advised the organizers who protested against the World Trade Organization in Seattle (1999), is credited with making pivotal contributions to the successful launching of Indy-Media centers around the world, and wrote the call to action for Code Pink (2002), a well-regarded and powerful feminist organization.

To her credit, she understands that the organizations she helped found to expand the impact of her thinking—the Reclaiming Collective (1979) and Earth Activist Trainings (2001)—must operate in a manner that is consistent with her egalitarian principles. In short, she must walk her talk to be an effective leader, listening closely to all, and helping to develop the collective wisdom. By all accounts she has accomplished this with uncommon grace, humility, and consistency.

Starhawk, for all of the above, the FIC salutes you. 🌸

Former Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), co-founder of Sandhill Farm, an egalitarian community in Missouri, and convener of FIC's awards committee, Laird Schaub lives with his partner, Susan Anderson, in Duluth, Minnesota. A facilitation trainer and process consultant, he also authors a blog that can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.

Call for Nominations

There's still time to submit nominations for the 2020 Kozeny Communitarian Award! The deadline is April 1, 2019.

FIC began offering this annual honor in 2009, in recognition of the spirit and legacy of "The Peripatetic Communitarian," Geoph Kozeny (1949-2007). This Award is intended to celebrate the accomplishments of a person or organization in one or more of the following ways: Networker, Media Relations, Good Neighbor, Community Builder, Creating Community in Place, Cooperative Leadership, Historian/Preservationist. For more details about the award and how to submit your nomination please visit ic.org/kozeny-communitarian-award

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Honoring Starhawk 2019 Kozeny Communitarian Award Recipient



Stephan Readmond

The Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) recognizes Starhawk as the 2019 recipient of the Kozeny Communitarian Award, honoring of the indomitable spirit of Geoph Kozeny (1949-2007), who devoted his adult life to creating community in the world.

Starhawk is a well-known author and an internationally recognized activist and practitioner in the fields of permaculture, eco-feminism, and Earth-based spirituality. Over the course of the last four decades she has written 13 books—a veritable canon—all rooted in cooperative principles. The thread of community is woven throughout the tapestry of her work, where she makes the case for community as a foundational building block of peace, social justice, and sustainability.

From the perspective of this award it's notable how much Starhawk has done to articulate the relevance of cooperative culture to modern society, where unchecked competition has

resulted in gross imbalances of income and access to resources. She does not just sing to the choir.

While her work is broad and has undoubtedly had far-reaching impact, we are mainly celebrating her accomplishments in three respects:

Media Relations

As an author and public figure, Starhawk is regularly approached by journalists, and is often in a position to have her written or spoken word disseminated widely. This is both a responsibility and an opportunity, which Starhawk has used judiciously and with effect. (It's one thing to have a microphone shoved in your face; it's another to be able to deliver a pithy, cogent message on demand, with celerity and grace.)

In addition to books, public speaking, and workshops, Starhawk has produced a number of videos, CDs, and audio tapes, which are an outgrowth of her original academic training at UCLA in the '70s.

With respect to her writing, we want to make particular note of one of her most recent titles, *The Empowerment Manual* (2011). Different from her other offerings, this nonfiction guidebook is a solid treatment of a complex challenge: demystifying cooperative group dynamics for the lay reader. In addition to explaining how to conduct productive meetings, it tackles the third-rail issues of conflict and power imbalances. This book is a recommended resource for any cooperative group.

Creating Community in Place

The bulk of Starhawk's work as a teacher and workshop leader has been focused on permaculture and Earth-based spirituality. In that context she has consistently delivered her messages in a way that promotes group cohesion and develops a sense of community among participants. This is an experience that most humans long for—whether they can articulate it or not—and Starhawk knows how to deliver the goods.

While Starhawk's experiences in intentional community are less well known than her other work, much of her teaching has been informed by the personal lessons she's gleaned from decades of group living in the Bay Area. No small part of this award is recognizing the pioneering work she's done to make the practical tools of cooperation available to the wider culture,

(continued on p. 75)

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